

WEDDING POLICIES



CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
1101 Franklin Road, S.W.
Roanoke, Virginia
540-343-0159

Revised 9/07

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

SHOULD WE BE MARRIED IN THE CHURCH?

At this point, it may sound like a silly question. However, it is one you should consider.

A marriage is, at the least, a legal occasion, in that all marriages must conform to the laws of the state in which they are performed. It may also be a social occasion when family and friends gather together and, borrowing from a rich array of customs and traditions, join in celebrating the union of husband and wife. All that is actually necessary for the legal and social requirements for marriage to be fulfilled is an appropriate place for the ceremony (such as a house or garden) and a properly licensed official (such as a judge). If neither party in the marriage is a practicing Christian, this kind of arrangement would be entirely proper; there would be no need for a church, and indeed a church would be inappropriate.

If one or both of the persons to be married is a practicing Christian, a third dimension is added to the legal and social aspects. By choosing to be married in the church the couple is making a faith statement to all their family and friends which in effect says, “We are two Christians who desire to make a marriage covenant before God and in the presence of God’s people. In a service of worship we want to stand before God’s altar and commit ourselves to each other for the rest of our lives. We intend to live our married life according to Christian values and in the context of the community of the faithful (the church). We are inviting God’s life and love to be at the center of our marriage. In order to make an appropriate beginning, we have come to this place to ask the church in the name of God to bless our commitment and to ask the congregation gathered to pray for us.”

As you can see, a Christian wedding is far more than a legal and/or social event; it is above all a service of worship. Indeed, it is a sacramental act—an event whereby the grace and love of God are made known through the words and actions of the couple.

WHO MAY BE MARRIED AT CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Christ Church is available for marriage ceremonies when one of the persons to be married is:

1. an active member of Christ Church;
2. a former member of Christ Church now living elsewhere; or
3. the son or daughter of a current active member of Christ Church.

Requests which do not fall into one of these categories will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

All weddings must receive preliminary approval from the clergy of Christ Church before the date can be entered on the parish calendar. Final approval, where appropriate, is given after the successful completion of pre-marital counseling, and is at the sole discretion of the officiating minister.

In addition, there are these expectations:

1. One of you (the bride or the groom) must be a baptized Christian.
2. At least one of you must presently be part of a worshipping community; if other than Christ Church, you will need to provide a letter from your pastor/minister/priest attesting to this relationship.
3. The canons (laws) of the Episcopal Church require a minimum of thirty days' notice to the clergy preceding the wedding date. However it is far better to contact the clergy well in advance in order to guarantee that no conflicts in scheduling develop and that pre-marital counseling can be accomplished in the time available.
4. In the event that either one of you has been previously married, you must provide the clergy with appropriate evidence that the prior marriage has been annulled or dissolved by a final judgment or decree of a civil court of competent jurisdiction. With that evidence in hand, and having completed the pre-marital counseling, the officiating minister must request special permission from his or her bishop to solemnize the marriage. No date may be announced for the wedding, nor may invitations be issued, until the bishop's approval is in hand.

GENERAL INFORMATION

FORM OF SERVICE TO BE USED

All wedding services held at Christ Episcopal Church must conform to the worship tradition of the Episcopal Church as found in the Book of Common Prayer. All services are to be conducted by an Episcopal priest or bishop.

OFFICIATING CLERGY

One of the parish clergy normally officiates at Christ Church weddings. They may be assisted by other clergy at the request of the couple being married; invitations to participate are appropriately extended by the Christ Church officiant. Ministers from other traditions may be invited to participate in the service, but cannot be responsible for conducting the Episcopal rite.

PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING

The Episcopal Church requires pre-marital counseling for the couple with a member of its ordained clergy prior to the actual wedding. This is required by canon and cannot be waived. The purpose of such counseling is to help you reflect on the meaning of Christian marriage and to prepare yourselves for a lifelong commitment to each other.

DATES AND TIMES FOR THE WEDDING

A wedding may be held at any time in the course of the year except during Advent or Lent. Saturday weddings should be scheduled no earlier than 10:00 AM and no later than 7:00 PM.

The wedding rehearsal typically is held between 4:00 PM and 7:00 PM on the preceding evening. A rehearsal lasts approximately one hour. All members of the wedding party **must** be in attendance and on time, since the rehearsal involves the time of many people. The officiating minister, with the help of the parish Wedding Coordinator, will conduct the rehearsal. Any private consultants hired by you or your families have no authority once inside the doors of the Church. They may assist the Wedding Coordinator, but only at her discretion.

FACILITIES

Both the Church and Chapel are available for weddings. The seating capacity for the Chapel is 40. Seating capacity for the Church is 315-350, depending on whether seating in the chancel is used.

MARRIAGE LICENSE

Couples being married are required to obtain a marriage license from the Commonwealth of Virginia. Such license can be obtained at any court house throughout the state. Fees may vary from place to place. Both parties must be 18 years of age or older and each must present a valid driver's license or birth certificate. The marriage license should be delivered to the parish office no later than the Monday prior to a Saturday wedding.

OUR WEDDING STAFF AND POLICIES

The officiating minister assigns to each couple being married at Christ Church a Wedding Coordinator. Each Coordinator is a member of the Christ Church Altar Guild and it is her job to work closely with you throughout the planning process. Together you can begin to make the necessary and proper arrangements to insure not only that your wedding day flows beautifully and smoothly, but that the customs of the Episcopal Church are honored and upheld.

The following policies outline our expectations. They explain what we permit and what we are unable to accept.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY

Christ Church policy does not allow photography of any kind in the church prior to or during the ceremony itself.* The bride and groom are responsible for informing family and friends of this policy. In addition, a note will be included in the service leaflet, should there be one. If wedding guests violate this policy, the wedding coordinator is authorized to intervene.

We understand, however, the importance that most married couples place upon the preservation of their wedding day in photographs, and will provide opportunities for photographs before and/or after the ceremony. The parlor, chapel, and columbarium garden are all available for pre-wedding photographs. If group photographs of the wedding party in front of the altar are desired, they may be made in the church after the congregation has left. If any photographs are to include the officiating minister and/or other Christ Church personnel, it will be greatly appreciated if such persons could be in the first photograph(s). All photographs made in the church must be of an appropriate nature. In consideration for your guests and of Christ Church staff, **we ask that post-service photo sessions be limited to thirty minutes.**

A copy of this policy is provided and should be given to your photographer in contract form for his or her signature in order to avoid any misunderstandings. Ushers also will be asked to inform family and guests that pictures may not be taken during the service.

Video taping of the service may be done only by select videographers approved in advance by the Wedding Coordinator.

*There is a single exception to this policy: at the end of the service, it is permissible for the photographer to stand at the rear of the church (**not** in the center aisle) and take photos of the bride and groom as they come down the aisle on their way out of the church.

MUSIC

All weddings at Christ Church are worship services, and the music selected should be of an appropriate nature and in accordance with the standards of the Episcopal Church. The parish organist will be happy to help you select music that will add beauty, grace, and spiritual depth to the service. Texts of hymns and other music must be from Episcopal hymnals, The Book of Common Prayer, or directly from Holy Scripture. Texts from secular sources or semi-religious songs are not permitted.

It is your responsibility to contact the parish organist to set up a time to plan the service music. The normal pattern of musical pieces is as follows: a 20-30 minute prelude-recital before the wedding, a hymn (or instrumental piece) for the procession, hymns and other service music as needed during the ceremony, and a hymn or instrumental piece for the procession out of the church. (Note: The secular "traditional" wedding music of Mendelssohn and Wagner is not used; there are alternatives which are more suitable for Episcopal weddings.)

The use of soloists and instrumentalists can be a lovely addition to the service; however, all these must be approved by the parish organist at the time of your consultation.

Guest soloists are expected to arrive prepared and ready to sing. The warm-up with the organist, scheduled at a mutually convenient time (usually just before the wedding rehearsal), does not include learning notes or other musical preparation. No provision is made for additional practice.

A trumpeter is expected to be present for the rehearsal, and to be responsible for the musical logistics of the procession. Attending the wedding ceremony only, without practicing at the rehearsal, is not acceptable.

Should the parish organist be unavailable for your wedding he will make arrangements for a qualified substitute. The use of non-staff organists will be considered on an individual basis and is solely at the discretion of the parish organist.

ATTENDANTS

To maintain the focus on the sacrament rather than on the wedding party, the number of attendants for the bride and groom is limited to five each. Any proposed exceptions must be negotiated with the officiating minister.

DECORATIONS

Flowers

Flowers and other decorations are restricted to altar flowers, which will be ordered for you through our regular supplier and arranged by the Altar Guild. Your Wedding Coordinator will discuss with you your preferences with regard to specific flowers, containers, and style of arrangement and will inform you of pricing for your order after consulting with our supplier. Payment for flowers is to be made at the same time other fees are paid.

Flowers or bows may be used to decorate the brass railings in front of the church. Please discuss this with your Wedding Coordinator.

Flowers are not allowed in the baptismal font.

Candles

For evening services, aisle candles may be used in fixtures supplied by Christ Church. No decoration is needed for these and none is recommended as it blocks the view and obstructs the aisle. Fresh candles for the aisle fixtures are paid for by the couple and supplied by the Wedding Coordinator.

The use of what is commonly referred to in other denominations as a “Unity Candle” is not a part of the Episcopal marriage liturgy.

RICE, BIRD SEED, AND ROSE PETALS

The use of rice and birdseed is not permitted at Christ Church because it poses a serious hazard to birds and can make walking on exterior steps and sidewalks hazardous for your guests and others.

The scattering of rose petals down the center aisle during the procession is permitted. If you choose to incorporate this into the service, please inform your Wedding Coordinator so that special arrangements can be made for clean-up following the service.

BRIDAL PARTY DRESSING ARRANGEMENTS

Space is available at the church for the bridal party to dress prior to the service. The bride and her attendants use the church parlor, located adjacent to the parish hall. The groom and his groomsmen can be assigned a changing area if needed. If you decide that you would like to dress on site, please notify your Wedding Coordinator so that arrangements can be made. Please note that all personal belongings must be removed immediately following the service and before you leave the premises for the reception and the rooms must be left in their original state.

If necessary, you may bring snacks for the wedding party, but they may be consumed only in the dressing areas, and all items cleaned up before the wedding party departs for the reception. **The serving or use of alcoholic beverages prior to the wedding ceremony is prohibited and will be grounds for removal of the offending party from the premises.**

SERVICE LEAFLET

Programs for a wedding ceremony are not required, but can be helpful if a number of guests are not familiar with the Episcopal liturgy. These can be produced at no charge by the parish office. They must be ordered four weeks in advance and proofed by the officiating minister.

If a specific printing is desired (e.g., heavier paper), a camera ready copy of the text will be provided. The couple is expected to make any special printing arrangements directly with the printing company.

Please notify your Wedding Coordinator of your decision regarding service leaflets.

THE PROCESSION

All wedding processions at Christ Church are led by a crucifer carrying the processional cross, followed by the members of the wedding party. This includes the clergy and those who assist them at the altar, groom and groomsmen, and the bride and her attendants. Other participants may be included in the formal procession at the discretion of the officiating minister.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

The version of the Bible normally used for scripture readings at Christ Church is the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Readers of lessons should prepare their readings in this translation or the Revised Standard Version (RSV). Readers should be chosen by the bride and groom. It is quite appropriate for members of the family, the wedding party, or guests to participate in this way. If you prefer, Christ Church can provide readers.

AISLE RUNNER

The use of an aisle runner for the entrance of the bride and her escort is not permitted at Christ Church. There is a real danger of slipping on the floor and we cannot assume liability for this.

RECEPTIONS AT CHRIST CHURCH

Your wedding reception may be held in the Christ Church parish hall under certain circumstances. Please contact the Christ Church Office Manager for further information if you are interested in this option.

WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

Christ Episcopal Church
Roanoke, Virginia

[To be given to the person(s) photographing your wedding]

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We understand, however, the importance that most married couples place upon the preservation of their wedding day in photographs, and will provide opportunities for photographs before and/or after the ceremony. The parlor, chapel, and columbarium garden are all available for pre-wedding photographs. If group photographs of the wedding party in front of the altar are desired, they may be made in the church after the congregation has left. If any photographs are to include the officiating minister and/or sacristans, it will be greatly appreciated if she or he could be in the first photograph(s). All photographs made in the church must be of an appropriate nature. In consideration of wedding guests and Christ Church staff, we ask that post-service photo sessions be limited to thirty minutes.

*There is a single exception to this policy: at the end of the service, it is permissible for the photographer to stand at the rear of the church (**not** in the center aisle) and take photos of the bride and groom as they come down the aisle on their way out of the church.

**PHOTOGRAPHER:
PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THIS DOCUMENT FOR YOUR RECORDS.**

WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY POLICY

Christ Episcopal Church
Roanoke, Virginia

[To be signed by your photographer and returned to the parish office)

Enclosed you will find a copy of our wedding photography policy as it appears in the Christ Episcopal Church *Wedding Policies*. It is imperative that these rules be respected and followed. Your signature below indicates your agreement to the policy and your willingness to adhere to its provisions. If for any reason these rules are violated by you or a member of your staff, you will not be permitted to photograph future weddings at Christ Episcopal Church.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. Please fill out the agreement form below and return to us.

I, _____, have read and fully understand the wedding photography policies established for Christ Episcopal Church, Roanoke, Virginia. I agree to respect and abide by these policies.

SIGNATURE: _____

FIRM: _____

ADDRESS: _____

OFFICE PHONE: _____

NAMES OF BRIDE/GROOM: _____

DATE OF WEDDING: _____

Please return to: Christ Episcopal Church
1101 Franklin Road, S.W.
Roanoke, VA 24016

