



GRACE MEMORIAL EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Wedding Customary

Revised May 2024

Welcome and Overview

We welcome you as you embark on the venture of Holy Matrimony. It is a privilege to be part of this with you, and we pray that God's grace will be a source of strength and joy in your life together.

Because a marriage is entered into within the community of faith, we normally expect one party, at least, to be an active member of Grace Memorial or in the process of becoming part of this parish. We believe that the spiritual dimension of life is the vital core of a marriage and that the support of the community of the church is essential. It is the Spirit who transforms a human marriage into Holy Matrimony.

An interview with the Rector is the first step to take in making plans for a wedding, and we suggest that this be done at least six months in advance of the proposed wedding. Initial dates and times for the rehearsal and wedding can be arranged before this, but final plans cannot be made until after a personal interview with the Rector. The Rector of Grace Memorial normally presides at the wedding. Clergy of the Episcopal Church or other faith traditions may be invited to participate with the approval of the Rector.

Under no circumstances will a wedding be conducted where either of the persons has entered into a written or verbal agreement undertaking to convert the spouse or raise the children in another community of faith. We believe that such a commitment undermines the freedom of choice and the integrity of the relationship. Where persons bring different traditions of faith to the marriage, premarital counseling will explore ways and means of reconciling those differences in a creative manner which will enrich rather than impoverish the marriage.

We will not conduct "covenant marriages" as defined by the State of Louisiana, nor marriages entered into with prenuptial agreements. We believe that such legal arrangements undermine the church's teaching about marriage and represent a lack of theological understanding of marriage as a lifelong commitment based on interpersonal trust.

Pre-Marital Counseling

The canon law of the Episcopal Church requires that all persons be properly instructed in our understanding of marriage as a physical and spiritual union of two persons, entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent of heart, mind and will, and with the intent that it be lifelong. In the course of premarital conversations, engaged couples have the opportunity to explore with each other various aspects of their future life together. This instruction is normally carried out by the officiating priest, in the course of at least five sessions, each lasting approximately 60-90 minutes.

Marriage Following a Civil Divorce

Where one or both of the persons has been previously married and subsequently divorced, permission to be re-married in the Church must be obtained, in consultation with a priest, from the Bishop of the Diocese of Louisiana in accordance with the canonical requirements. Such permission will be requested *only after ascertaining the following*:

1. That both persons intend to make The Episcopal Church the center of their religious life and to participate regularly in the worship of The Episcopal Church. Such intention is normally demonstrated by continuity of attendance at Sunday worship, preparation for Baptism or Confirmation if one or both are not already communicants, and support of the local parish and its programs.
2. That the divorced person(s) can demonstrate:
 - a. An understanding of the reasons for the breakdown of the earlier marriage.
 - b. Has accepted responsibility, in a spirit of mature Christian love, for one's personal failures which contributed to the breakdown.
 - c. Has agreed to continue to meet the obligations of parenthood toward children born to the earlier marriage.
3. In the judgment of the priest, the proposed marriage is sufficiently well motivated, and the persons demonstrate a degree of maturity which will enable them to remain faithful to the lifelong vows they make.

Matrimonial Fees

Since it is expected that couples being married at Grace Memorial are active members supporting the parish, there are no fees for the clergy or for the use of the church. Most couples do, however, use this occasion to make a thank-offering to the parish, and an honorarium to the officiating clergy. The suggested donation for members or those in a process of membership is \$500. The suggested donation for non-members from other parishes is \$1,000. The suggested clergy honorarium is typically at least \$250.

The Marriage License

Per Louisiana law, marriage licenses must be obtained at least twenty-four hours in advance of a wedding. We require obtaining the license and giving it to the officiating priest before the start of the rehearsal at the latest.

The Rehearsal

Rehearsals typically take place in the church on the evening before the wedding date. All matters of procedure at the rehearsal and at the ceremony are to be under the direction of the Rector.

Flowers

The altar is the focal point of the church, and flowers help to enhance the beauty of the space without overwhelming it. Flowers at the altar are placed on the retable behind the altar on the sides of the cross, and arrangements should not be taller than 2ft., 6.5in. There are two moveable wooden columns that may also have floral arrangements. Flowers are to be delivered to the church at a convenient time decided in consultation with the church's Wedding Coordinators on the morning of the wedding. It is customary that the flowers behind the altar and on the columns are left in the church for Sunday services. Floral decorations on the pew ends are acceptable, subject to the approval of the Wedding Coordinators, but must not obstruct the aisle.

Candles

For most weddings it is customary to use two candles on the altar and the standing candelabras on each side of the altar. The use of a "unity candle" is not a part of the liturgy or tradition of the Episcopal Church.

Music

Music for weddings will be selected in consultation with the Rector and our Music Director, Dr. Liliia Oliinyk. Liturgical or classical music is the rule for Holy Matrimony. Taped music is not permitted. The fee for the Organist-Choirmaster is \$250; subject to change depending on the number and difficulty of the music requested. Checks should be made directly to Dr. Oliinyk. Liturgical or classical music is the rule for Holy Matrimony.

If special arrangements for instrumental music other than organ are to be made, this should be done in consultation with the Music Director. If singers or other musicians are requested, the fee will be an additional \$150 per musician. If you wish to invite a soloist from outside the parish, please make arrangements with the Music Director well in advance.

Photography and Videography

Photographs preserve the precious moments of a wedding, but flash bulbs are distracting and irreverent. Therefore we permit only time exposures utilizing available light during the wedding liturgy, though flashes may be used during the processions in and out. Professional photographers should confer with the Rector before the service. The photographer may not move about during the liturgy. Please also ask your guests to refrain from photography during the liturgy. Arrangements can be made with the Rector for the wedding party to reassemble following the liturgy at which time ceremonial pictures may be taken.

If videography is desired, the videographer must also confer with the Rector before the service. Videography equipment must be set up at a stationary position at the rear of the church, or on one side of the chancel. The videographer may not move about during the liturgy.

The Liturgy

The liturgy used are those authorized by The Episcopal Church. It is customary that the Holy Eucharist be celebrated as part of the marriage rite. All baptized Christians present at a wedding are invited to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion. Because of the liturgical character of a Christian wedding, the attire of the wedding party should be modest and appropriate to the sacred atmosphere of the ceremony (e.g., no low-cut bridal gowns or attendant dresses).

We do not celebrate weddings at Grace Memorial during the seasons of Lent or Advent.

Other General Information

Please be aware of the space limitations of Grace Memorial. The church can comfortably seat approximately 120 people. In addition, the church can comfortably accommodate approximately five attendants to stand on each side of the wedding couple. Please plan accordingly.

The parlor of the church is available to the wedding party on the day of the ceremony. The church Wedding Coordinators will show the wedding party to this part of the facility.

There is no need for an aisle runner. The center of the aisle of the green carpet will make a beautiful showing for any wedding attire.

No glitter is allowed in the church.

No beverage or food is allowed in the church..

No smoking is permitted in the building.

No alcoholic beverages are permitted on the premises for a wedding. *Please note that any member of the wedding party who arrives at the wedding under the influence of drugs or alcohol will under no circumstances be allowed to remain on the property, much less participate in the service.*

The clergy of Grace Memorial Episcopal Church will refuse to participate in any wedding in which the couple are found to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

The throwing of rice, bird seed, or any other material is not permitted in any area of the church building or on the grounds.

You may request to have acolytes for your wedding service. It is suggested that you give each acolyte an honorarium of \$25.00.

The Church Office shall prepare all wedding programs for the marriage liturgy. The preparation of the wedding program is solely a matter of consultation between the officiating priest and the couple.

All outside suppliers (florists, caterers, photographers, etc.) should be informed that the Wedding Coordinators and the Altar Guild under the direction of the Rector have the final word on any decorations or use of church property. While you may have a wedding consultant to help with arrangements for the reception, the church is responsible for shaping the service of Holy Matrimony.