



Wedding Policies of Christ Church Parish

The first question a couple must answer is whether or not they desire a Christian marriage or simply a place in which to be married.

There is a risk that the nature and purpose of Christian marriage can be lost when the church and the building are reduced to no more than a beautiful setting for a service. It is vital for couples planning to be married in the church to understand that Christian marriage assumes the centrality of Jesus Christ and our life of discipleship in his life and the life of his Church, both in the new relationship and throughout their life together. The marriage liturgy itself is the beginning of that remarkable journey.

If you are seriously considering the implications involved in a Christian marriage, we look forward to working with you at Christ Church.

The Wedding Policies of Christ Church Parish serve three purposes: First, to uphold the sacramental character of marriage and the reality that a wedding is a worship service. In other words, it is aimed towards God. Second, to foster an attitude of reverence, devotion, and celebration by all participants of each marriage celebrated at Christ Church. Third, since a church is a community with history and traditions, to abide by norms set by the people who are Christ Church.

The following are some questions and answers that will help as you consider and plan a wedding at Christ Church.

Important: Nothing is officially on the calendar until the Rector (or other priest on staff at Christ Church) meets with the couple and approves their wedding application (see website). It is strongly recommended that you do not make other plans (reception, caterer, etc.) until a firm date has been set, and it has been approved.

Who may be married at Christ Church?

1. Members of Christ Church (a member is defined as someone who is an active part of the Church and contributes financially).
2. Children or Grandchildren of Members of Christ Church.
3. In unique circumstances, the rector may permit someone who is not a member or direct descendant of a member to be married at Christ Church, but this is rare. There would need to be a reason why Christ Church in particular is the appropriate church to perform your wedding.

What is required at an Episcopal wedding?

1. We conform to "The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage" in the Book of Common Prayer. There is some flexibility within the service, but there are also things that are required (ie. the reading from the Gospel), not allowed (writing your own vows), and optional (communion). As Episcopalians, we are bound to the Book of Common Prayer.

2. The priest must be given at least 90 days notice prior to the wedding.
3. The couple must engage in premarital counseling as directed by the officiating priest.
4. The couple is responsible for obtaining a valid marriage license.
5. If either party to the proposed marriage has been married previously and that marriage ended in divorce, that person is required to write to the Bishop explaining what happened and how this relationship is different. While we strongly believe in fresh starts and there is always grace, we take marriage seriously and as part of the premarital counseling previous marriages will be discussed.
6. According to the Canons (laws) of the Episcopal Church, the clergy may decline to perform any marriage.

How are wedding arrangements made?

Step One: Submit a wedding application.

Step Two: Within two weeks of submitting a wedding application on the Christ Church website, a priest will contact you to set up a meeting.

Step Three: If permission is granted, contact the Parish Secretary (Kelly Heindl) to confirm date and time.

Step Four: Plan premarital counseling with officiating priest.

Step Five: Meet with the Parish Wedding Coordinator (Nancy Matthews) to go over details and plans. Aside, if you have a wedding planner they may be a part of this discussion, but be aware that while a wedding planner may be in charge of before and after the wedding, the priest and the Wedding Coordinator have absolute authority over the wedding itself.

Step Six: Meet with the Director of Music (see section on Music).

Who may officiate at the wedding?

Typically, one of the priests at Christ Church performs the wedding ceremony. Outside Episcopal clergy may conduct weddings with the expressed consent of the Rector. Clergy of other denominations may assist Episcopal clergy when the involvement seems appropriate.

When can I schedule weddings?

No weddings may be scheduled before 10:00AM or after 5:30PM.

Weddings may not take place during any four days prior to Ash Wednesday, during Lent, Holy Week, Memorial Day weekend, Labor Day weekend, Thanksgiving weekend, the four days prior to Christmas, Christmas Day or the day after Christmas, New Year's Eve, or New Year's Day.

The Church will be available (upon request) two hours before the wedding for photographs or to get dressed and thirty minutes after the wedding for photographs.

Can children or pets be in the ceremony?

Children are always welcome at Christ Church. It is recommended that if a child participates as a ringbearer or flower girl, they process down the aisle and then go sit with their parents or other family member. From experience, we have learned that children struggle to stand at the front throughout the service without being a distraction.

Animals are not allowed in the church buildings unless they are legitimate service animals; therefore, they cannot participate in weddings.

What about service leaflets?

Service leaflets are not provided by the church; however, couples may wish to create their own. The priest will provide assistance on what to include in a leaflet and must approve of the final product.

What is the rehearsal?

Normally the rehearsal takes place on the evening prior to the wedding. Everyone who is to have a role in the ceremony must attend. Please encourage everyone to be on time. The rehearsal generally lasts under an hour.

Bring the marriage license to the rehearsal so the priest can hold it until the wedding.

May we have The Holy Eucharist as part of our Service?

The Holy Eucharist is not a necessary part of the wedding service, but can add significance. It is completely up to the couple. While everyone in our church is invited to receive communion, if a majority of the congregation is not familiar with the Episcopal service, some couples choose not to include it. Communion can be offered at the rehearsal if it is not a part of the wedding service.

What about flowers, candles, pew markers, and decorations?

All arrangements for flowers on the Altar are made by the Flower Guild Coordinator. Flowers are only used in the two vases on the altar. The Flower Guild orders the flowers and has them arranged for the service by a member of the Altar Guild. Altar flowers are a contribution to the worship of the church and remain in place for such services as may follow the wedding. An appropriate thanksgiving or memorial statement may be included in the Sunday bulletin.

The only candles that are used are the candles that are in the Church for regular services.

Pew markers, if desired, are the wedding party's responsibility.

The following items are NOT to be used: candle stands, flowers stands, pots, urns, kneeling bench, or an aisle runner. Also specifically not permitted is the throwing, on or near Church premises of rice, seeds, confetti, or other forms of litter. Flower girls may carry flowers, but may not throw petals.

The ornaments and appointments of the Sanctuary and Chancel-including seasonal ornaments such as the Advent Wreath, and the Paschal Candle, are part of the permanent liturgical life of the Church and may not be disturbed or removed.

In decorating, nothing should be used that may cause permanent damage to any of the pews, carpets, etc. Tacks, tape or other material that might deface the furnishings may not be used.

What rules govern photography for our wedding?

A wedding is a worship service. It is the joining of two people before God and their friends and family. While we want you to have pictures to remember this important day, it is important that the photographer/videographer does not distract from this act of worship.

Before the ceremony, photographs may be taken throughout and around the church buildings, but must be completed 45 minutes before the service begins.

During the ceremony, photographs may be taken without a flash from the back of the church up to the speakers on the wall (the Wedding Coordinator will show the photographer where this is). There is only one exception to this rule. The photographer can discreetly move to the front of the church before the bride processes down the aisle to capture the bride and her escort entering the church. Since the entire congregation is facing towards the back of the church, this is not a distraction. Video must be operated silently on a tripod and without any auxiliary lighting. Photos of the wedding party exiting the nave may be taken from no closer forward than the third row of the rear of the church.

After the ceremony, staged photographs must be completed 30 minutes after the conclusion of the wedding, so be organized and give your photographer clear instructions on which pictures you would like to take.

Please share these policies with your photographer. Experience has taught us that this can be a problem. Some photographers are so focused on getting the perfect shot that they take something away from the solemnity of the sacrament. Therefore, photographers who are not respectful of these policies during the ceremony will not be invited to participate at future weddings at Christ Church.

Can we hold our reception at the church?

Arrangements may be made for the reception to be held in the Parish Hall or Parlor. The length of the wedding reception can be no longer than three hours and may not exceed 8:00 PM, including clean-up time. (We need time to set everything up for Sunday services.)

If there is food, a private caterer must be engaged and will be responsible for providing all required glass, china, and flatware, together with serving dishes and linens. The kitchen will only be available for limited refrigeration space and for serving and clean-up of already prepared food.

The Church assumes no responsibility for property brought on campus by the caterer or members of the wedding party.

The Church Sextons may not be asked to assist the caterer in any way. They are present for security purposes only.

The Sextons will be responsible for moving church property before and after the reception.

Private caterers must leave the Parish Hall or kitchen in the condition it was found, including cleaning.

The only alcoholic beverages that may be served or brought into the Parish Hall are wine, beer, and champagne, and these are to be served at the reception only.

What determines the use of alcohol at Christ Church?

No alcoholic beverages are allowed anywhere on the premises including the men's and women's dressing areas or the parking lot.

What about Music?

Music, be it instrumental or vocal, congregational or choral, can be a beautiful adornment to wedding liturgy, and Christ Church's Director of Music, David Leahey, will be glad to guide you through the process of music selection. Planning ahead is always beneficial, so it is best to schedule your initial consultation as soon as possible. David will make every effort to accommodate specific or personal requests, within the general parameters of music within Christ Church Parish. Inherently secular or profane vocal or choral texts are prohibited, as well as any music deemed unsuitable for inclusion in the context of a religious service. Secular music may be included in the ceremony provided it is performed instrumentally, and all vocal text must be religious in nature.

The default assumption for wedding music at Christ Episcopal Church is the use of the organ by our Director of Music. If he is unavailable for your service, the church will secure a substitute organist. In the event that the couple desire a different organist, permission for his/her use of the instrument is at the discretion of the Director of Music, and arrangements must be made with him well in advance of the wedding date. (Compensation for an organist independently selected and engaged by the couple is the financial responsibility of the couple, not the parish.)

The inclusion of other or additional musical resources – instrumental, vocal, or choral – is also an option. The Director of Music must approve the participation of any such performers, and the music they will offer, well in advance of the wedding date. Coordinating with other performers can represent a significant increase in the time required of the Director of Music, so early planning is essential. The couple are responsible for the payment of any fees incurred by additional musicians in advance of the wedding date. Any arrangements with musicians for the reception are made independent of the church.

What fees are charged for a wedding at Christ Church?

All fees are due 30 days prior to the wedding date.

Wedding (includes the use of the church, the presence of a sexton for the wedding and rehearsal, and the flowers for the altar)	\$650
Clergy	\$250
Organist	\$300
Reception in Parish Hall/Parlor	\$250
Chapel Wedding	\$250