



EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

RESTORING ALL PEOPLE TO UNITY IN GOD AND EACH OTHER IN CHRIST

Sentbythespirit.org

Wedding Customary

Congratulations on your engagement and to the beginning of your life together. We at the Church of the Holy Spirit celebrate marriage and its witness of Christ's love for the Church. Over the coming months, you and your partner will prepare to spend the rest of your life together. I hope this process is enjoyable and that you learn more about yourself and the person you will marry.

This document you are about to read is filled with information about what is required to be married in the Episcopal Church and at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit. Please know that in some cases, and for pastoral reasons, there may be exceptions or additions to what is expected from each party. Other times, because of what is required by the Episcopal Church, there may not be room to negotiate. Please also know that we, in this congregation, work hard to support every couple in their life together.

I look forward to spending time with you and your fiancé over the coming months.

Faithfully,

The Rev. Jason T. Roberts
Rector, Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit

A Prayer from the Marriage Ceremony

O gracious and everliving God, you have created us male and female in your image: Look mercifully upon these two who come to you seeking your blessing, and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep the promises and vows they make; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

From the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer Concerning Marriage

Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God. In the Episcopal Church it is required that one, at least, of the parties must be a baptized Christian; that the ceremony be attested by at least two witnesses; and that the marriage conform to the laws of the State and the canons of this Church. A priest or a bishop normally presides at the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage, because such ministers alone have the function of pronouncing the nuptial blessing, and of celebrating the Holy Eucharist. When both a bishop and a priest are present and officiating, the bishop should pronounce the blessing and preside at the Eucharist. A deacon, or an assisting priest, may deliver the charge, ask for the Declaration of Consent, read the Gospel, and perform other assisting functions at the Eucharist. Where it is permitted by civil law that deacons may perform marriages, and no priest or bishop is available, a deacon may use the service that follows, omitting the nuptial blessing that follows The Prayers.

It is desirable that the Lessons from the Old Testament and the Epistles be read by laypersons. In the opening exhortation (at the symbol of N.N.), the full names of the persons to be married are declared. Subsequently, only their Christian names are used.

Who may get married at the Church of the Holy Spirit?

Because Christian marriage is best supported in the context of a worshipping community, the Church of the Holy Spirit performs marriages for members, children of members, and grandchildren of members. If the couple does not hold membership (but falls into one of the categories listed above) at the Church of the Holy Spirit, they are expected to have a Christian worshipping community, wherever they live, in which they are active. After the marriage, their own congregation will be immediately informed so that it can be recorded in their records. For any marriage at the Church of the Holy Spirit, one or both parties must be baptized.

If you desire to become a member or be baptized, we welcome and encourage you to talk with a priest at the Church of the Holy Spirit about the process for both.

What is required for marriages at the Church of the Holy Spirit?

1. The Episcopal Church requires that each couple receive premarital preparation in at least three sessions. Marriage preparation must begin **six months or more** before the requested marriage date. The priest presiding over the service will determine if they will provide the marriage preparation or ask the couple to seek preparation elsewhere. This decision is at the sole discretion of the presiding priest. At the Church of the Holy Spirit, we use the Prepare/Enrich program to support our conversation. The couple pays for the minimal fee for this online questionnaire, which should be filled out separately as soon as you and your fiancé receive your invitation.
2. Holy Baptism: In order to be married in the Episcopal Church, at least one of the parties must be a baptized Christian. The Episcopal Church recognizes all baptisms which have been done with water and in the name of the Holy Trinity.
3. The Declaration of Intention: This is a document that must be signed by both the bride and the groom. The purpose of Christian marriage is stated in the “Declaration of Intention” from the canons of the Episcopal Church.

This Declaration states,

“We do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. We believe that the union of husband and wife, in heart, body, and mind, is intended by God for their 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 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.”

Both parties must affirm and sign this statement at least **thirty days before** the wedding. The canons of the Episcopal Church state, "It shall be within the discretion of any Minister of this Church to decline to solemnize any marriage." Such action may be taken if the priest thinks that the couple does not intend to build a Christian marriage. For this reason, counseling sessions must be completed and the celebrant should have given consent to perform the ceremony before any invitations being mailed.

4. Marriage License: A Marriage License must be obtained **within 30 days of the date of marriage**. More information can be obtained through the Bexar County website at <https://gov.propertyinfo.com/tx-bexar/Marriage.aspx>. Without this license, there can be no marriage service. It is best if this license is brought to the rehearsal.

5. Marriage of Divorced Persons: The Episcopal Church does allow the remarriage of divorced persons, but strict guidelines must be followed. This process takes time, and divorced persons contemplating marriage must take this into account in making their plans. Counseling should be undertaken first, and then a date for the wedding should be set.
 - a. It is necessary that the Bishop give consent to the remarriage, and diocesan guidelines state that no date for marriage should be firmly set and that no one should announce it until consent has been received from the Bishop. The priest who will solemnize your marriage will write the Bishop and will inform you of the Bishop's decision. The letter to the Bishop must be mailed **at least thirty days prior** to the proposed date of the wedding. For obvious reasons, it is better to write the Bishop much sooner than thirty days prior to the proposed wedding date. In order to do this you must begin the premarital counseling process in a timely fashion.
 - b. You should bring your copy of the final divorce decree to the first counseling session, along with a copy for the Church's files. In addition to the premarital counseling process described above, the canons require that adequate continuing concern be shown for the previous spouse(s) and any children. Diocesan guidelines state that it is reasonable that **at least one calendar year** has elapsed since the date(s) of the final decree/s and the submission of the Petition. Exceptions are possible, but only if a minimum of **18 months'** uninterrupted separation has occurred.
 - c. If any other minister of the Episcopal Church has declined to solemnize the proposed marriage, this must be made known to the priest of this parish who is considering your marriage. It is required that the minister who is contemplating your marriage consult with the one who declined to solemnize it.
 - d. In the case where either party has had a second divorce, the application for the Bishop's consent shall not be made (a) unless **one year** has passed since the final divorce decree, (b) unless both parties to the proposed marriage have sought and received professional marriage counseling, and (c) until the counselor has reported to the minister the belief that the two persons asking for permission to marry are, in the opinion of the counselor, adequately prepared for a lifelong union.
 - e. This professional counseling shall be in addition to the counseling described above and performed by a priest of this parish (or someone appointed by a priest of this parish).

6. **Expenses:** The Church of the Holy Spirit does not profit from weddings. However, fees are required to help cover expenses. The clergy do not charge a fee. If an offering of thanks is made, it may be given directly to the priest. Couples often ask what amount is appropriate and this is a matter of discretion. An amount between \$150-\$400 is appropriate, taking into account whether the person performing the wedding has also done your premarital counseling.
 - a. Please see the current listing of fees on the bottom of the wedding day questionnaire. If any of the fees present a legitimate hardship, please speak to the Officiant to discuss other arrangements.
 - b. For pastoral reasons, exceptions can be made if the couple has no relationship with the Church of the Holy Spirit as a member, children of members, or grandchildren of members. Please speak with the Rector about such a situation.

What about same-gender marriage?

Episcopal Churches vary when it comes to same-gender marriage. The National Episcopal Church has cleared the way for same-gender marriage while also giving supervision to the local diocesan bishop. In the Diocese of West Texas, the Bishop permits same-gender marriages. Please get in touch with Fr. Jason to learn about the most current policy of the Diocese of West Texas. All of the expectations above apply to same-gender marriage – from baptism to remarriage if there has been a divorce.

How do I know what to plan for the Ceremony?

After the marriage preparation is finished, the wedding ceremony itself may be planned. Typically, time is set aside to discuss this at the last counseling session. To avoid a stressful schedule during the month leading up to your wedding it is best that counseling be completed **eight weeks before** the ceremony. As noted, counseling should be completed before mailing the invitations. By church law the celebrant is not able to give consent to perform the ceremony until the counseling is complete.

Here are some basic questions to help you make choices about a number of aspects of the ceremony.

1. Which lessons would you like to use (refer to the Book of Common Prayer for suggested readings or to Appendix A). Choose an Old Testament lesson, a New Testament Lesson and a Gospel reading. You may also choose a psalm.
2. Would you like a homily (short sermon)? If so, who should offer it?
3. Will the service include Holy Communion?
4. Do you want hymns or only instrumental music? During the marriage service, only Christian music is permitted. We also only allow live-performed music during the worship service.
5. Who you would like to read lessons and offer the prayers after the exchange of vows? (It is recommended that you choose people to do these things and not have the celebrant choose them.).
6. Who you would like to serve as an acolyte?
7. Who would you like to serve as chalice bearers if there is communion?

Music: After the completion of pre-marital counseling and discussing the above seven things with the celebrant for your wedding, the couple is to set an appointment with the Minister of Music of the Church of the Holy Spirit to discuss music for the service. You will need to meet at least **four to eight weeks prior** to the wedding, so please take this into account when you are scheduling counseling sessions. Music at a wedding follows the standards for music in the public worship of The Episcopal Church. Final approval of the music rests with the Rector (or with the Officiant of the service as approved by the Rector) following consultation with the Minister of Music. When the couple wishes to have a choir sing at the wedding, they may request that a choir from the Church of the Holy Spirit participate. If available, this will be arranged by the Minister of Music. Other instrumentalists and soloists may be used, provided our Minister of Music agrees and assists in the planning. **All instrumentalists and soloists must be approved by our Minister of Music.** There is an additional fee if other musicians are used for the service and will be accompanied by our church musicians. (Please see the fee schedule in Appendix B.)

It is expected that the music minister of this church will review music for all services, including weddings. If there are extenuating circumstances where the choice of a musician is concerned, this issue may be raised with the Rector and with the Minister of Music. If within their genre, staff musicians must first be offered the opportunity to provide music. If our musicians are not available, a substitute will be approved in conversation with the church musician. Regardless of who offers the music at the service, final approval of the music rests with the Rector following consultation with the church's musicians. The Minister of Music at the Church of the Holy Spirit is the liaison with outside musicians. A list of the music for the service should be submitted for approval to the Church through our Minister of Music.

We only allow live music to be offered. Prerecorded music is not allowed.

D. A word about Visiting Clergy, Flowers, Candles, Photographs, etc.

An Episcopal wedding is a service of public worship that follows the church's liturgy. The marriage services authorized by the Episcopal Church are straightforward, and the details of the ceremony are arranged to reflect those qualities.

All weddings through this congregation will be conducted by the Rector, or by someone approved by the Rector. The rehearsal will be conducted by the priest who will solemnize your marriage. A member of the staff or a Church volunteer may serve as wedding director. Ministers of other parishes and of different denominations may participate and assist when requested by the couple and when invited by the Rector.

Flowers will be placed in not more than two vases on the floor in front of the altar. Exemptions can be made if there is no Communion. Presently, the flower guild at Holy Spirit does not provide flower services for weddings and all flowers must be arranged with an outside vendor. In addition to what is mentioned around the altar, pew markers are permitted as well as a simple arrangement at the ends of the front altar rails. Artificial flower petals may be thrown but not real petals as they might stain the floor. No other flowers are permitted in the church except those bouquets carried by the actual bridal party and simple pew markers. The church's requirements keep costs down for the wedding party and maintain the simple dignity of the Church.

The only candles necessary are office lights, the Paschal Candle and the Eucharistic candles. *No photographs, with or without a flash, are allowed prior to or during the ceremony by members of the congregation.* A photographer may be stationed in the rear of the church and take photographs during the ceremony, provided no flash is used. Usually photographs are taken after the service and it is suggested that the couple have a list drawn up of each picture that needs to be taken so that the session may be expedited. A video recorder, without lights, may be stationed in the back corner(s) of the church or on top of the sound booth.

E. Finalizing plan and use of other spaces:

After plans have been finalized, please get in touch with the church administrator, Amanda La Hue, either in person, by telephone (210.314.6729) or email (holyspirit@sentbythespirit.org) to arrange for building use, the services of our sexton and other services. The necessary form (attached as appendix B) should be filled out and returned to the church administrator, Amanda La Hue, holyspirit@sentbythespirit.org. If desired, an appointment may be made with the church administrator to enlist their help in filling out the forms and answering questions.

Also, please note that we do not provide “security” to direct parking or to keep an eye on belongings during the wedding. All valuables should be removed from the building and locked in the trunk of your car during the ceremony.

We are glad for you to use our outdoor spaces for a small reception, provided it does not conflict with church functions and concludes by 9 pm. As a general rule, no alcoholic refreshments are to be served or carried inside the church. Alcohol must be limited to beer, wine, and champagne. Attractive non-alcoholic alternatives must be easily accessible and presented with the same intentionality and variety as beverages with alcohol. **No liquor drinks.** Extra fees are charged for the front porch and other spaces around the property. Exceptions to this policy for wedding receptions must conform to the vestry’s guidelines for building use. Please request a copy of this policy from the Rector (or the priest undertaking your premarital counseling) or the church administrator.

Rice, which is hazardous to the birds if ingested, may not be used. Bird seed, grass seed, or bubbles are suggested as a substitute, if desired. It is important that you work out all the details of building use with the wedding coordinator. We expect that you treat the facilities of the church as you would your own home. All groomsmen and bridesmaids should pick up after themselves. Food and all trash should be disposed of properly in trashcans.

G. Bulletin: The Church of the Holy Spirit will gladly provide a bulletin for the service. This bulletin will look very similar to what we use on Sunday mornings and printed on the paper we normally use. We ask that you proofread it. All materials for the bulletin should be submitted to the rector or presiding priest no later than **3 weeks before** the service. Please see the attached sample bulletin (Appendix C) for a guide to format.

IV. Time line:

12 to 9 months from desired wedding date...contact the Rector and the Church Administrator, Amanda La Hue. Set date for ceremony and for premarital counseling. Where there is a divorce, more time will be necessary at this phase, as permission must be obtained from the bishop.

9 to 2 months prior to the ceremony...counseling undertaken

2 months prior to ceremony...counseling should be completed; plan ceremony with counselor/celebrant and then meet with organist/choir master

1 month prior to ceremony... obtain marriage license; file finalized plans for ceremony with Church. Return all forms to the Church administrator and send all fees to Church.

V. Contact Information: website – sentbythespirit.org

The Rector – The Jason T. Roberts 210.314.6729 x101 or email: jroberts@sentbythespirit.org.

The Church Administrator – Mrs. Amanda LaHue 210.314.6729 x 103, holyspirit@sentbythespirit.org

The Music Minister – Dr. Gary Mabry, gmabry@sentbythespirit.org

Appendix A: Suggested readings – from the Book of Common Prayer, p. 426

The Lesson:

Genesis 1:26-28 (Male and female he created them)

Genesis 2:4-9, 15-24 (A man cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh)

Song of Solomon 2:10-13; 8:6-7 (Many waters cannot quench love)

Tobit 8:5b-8 (*New English Bible*) (That she and I may grow old together)

Between the Readings, a Psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung or said.

Appropriate Psalms are 67, 127, and 128.

The Epistle:

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (Love is patient and kind)

Ephesians 3:14-19 (The Father from whom every family is named)

Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33 (Walk in love, as Christ loved us)

Colossians 3:12-17 (Love which binds everything together in harmony)

1 John 4:7-16 (Let us love one another for love is of God)

If there is to be a Communion, a passage from the Gospel always concludes the Readings.

The Gospel:

Matthew 5:1-10 (The Beatitudes)

Matthew 5:13-16 (You are the light . . . Let your light so shine)

Matthew 7:21, 24-29 (Like a wise man who built his house upon the rock)

Mark 10:6-9, 13-16 (They are no longer two but one)

John 15:9-12 (Love one another as I have loved you)

Clergy: _____ Musician: _____

Communion: (yes or no) _____ If yes - # to prepare: _____

Crucifer: (yes or no) _____ If yes – name: _____

Altar Flowers: If the service is on a Saturday, these flowers generally remain for use in church on the next day. The default message in the bulletin for Sunday is, “Given to the Glory of God and in thanksgiving for the marriage of *John and Jane Doe*.” If you would like a different message, please enter it below.

Number of seats needed marked off each side: Gospel side: _____ Epistle-side: _____

Flowers from _____ will be delivered at (time) _____

The Church will be unlocked two hours before the ceremony and for one hour following the ceremony. If this does not fit with your plans, please speak with the wedding coordinator to see if other arrangements can be made. This will involve a larger fee if the sexton must come early or stay late.

Is two hours prior to the service adequate: yes___ no___

If no, please explain: _____

We have two dressing areas available. Will you use the dressing areas prior to the service?

Room 1: (yes or no) _____ How many? _____

Room 2: (yes or no) _____ How many? _____

Will you need the Church to do your bulletin? (yes or no) _____ If yes, please see Appendix C.

Do you plan to take pictures in the church following the service? (Yes or No) _____ **Fees (to be paid in full 4 weeks prior to wedding)**

These fees are subject to change and apply to members, children of members or grandchildren of members. For all parties, the fees may vary depending on your requests. For the following fees, one check should be written to the church, unless otherwise noted.

- Amanda La Hue – **We will print up to 150 bulletins for no additional charge. After 150, the fee is 15 cents per black-and-white copy and 25 cents per color copy.** If desiring a slide show to accompany the service, the additional fee is \$200. This fee includes production and a person to run the presentation. The coordination of all the parties involved in a marriage takes a lot of time. Amanda La Hue, the church administrator, will manage the coordination and communication within the church among all parties.
- Worship Space (includes nursery for dressing of the females, the office area for the dressing of the men, the restrooms, and the sexton to open and clean the space): **\$550** for up to five hours of use. **\$125** per hour after five hours. If getting married in a space other than the primary worship space at Holy Spirit, these fees remain the same. These fees only apply to the use of the space for the marriage service, its preparation, and pictures afterward. If holding a small reception following the marriage service, additional hourly fees will apply.
- Sexton: **included in the \$550 space use fee above (\$35 each additional hour** needed beyond five hours)
- Church piano/organ accompanist: **\$175-\$225** depending on what is expected. The accompanist will determine the fee
- Minister of Music (if services are required beyond planning): **\$100 - \$250** depending on what is required. Please consult with your Officiant to determine the fee.
- If you require additional musicians, you will pay them directly the fee they request. This can range from \$75 - \$175 per person, depending on the quantity and difficulty of the music requested and the musician's experience. Again, all outside musicians must be vetted through the Minister of Music.
- Additional fees for the use of other spaces apply. Please ask the presiding priest for the Building Use Guidelines and fee chart.

Please sign below that you acknowledge and agree to the above fees. The Marriage License will not be mailed until the appropriate fees have been received by the Church of the Holy Spirit.

Signature

Signature

Printed Name

Printed Name

Appendix C: Bulletin Information Form

This form only needs to be filled out if Holy Spirit is doing your bulletin. If you are providing your own program/ order bulletin, it must be approved and edited by the Officiant at least two weeks before the service.

INFORMATION MUST BE RECEIVED AT LEAST 3 WEEKS BEFORE WEDDING
AND
BRIDE and/or GROOM MUST PROOF AT LEAST 2 WEEKS BEFORE WEDDING

Prelude: _____
Processional: _____
Old Testament Lesson: _____
Gradual Hymn: _____
New Testament Lesson: _____
Hymn: _____
The Gospel Lesson: _____
Wedding Homily: (yes or no) _____ If yes, clergy? _____
Recessional: _____

THE FOLLOWING IN ITALICS IS ONLY DONE IF YOU ARE HAVING COMMUNION
Hymn during altar preparation: _____

Communion Hymn: _____

Would you like the altar flowers to be given in memory of any family?

Would you like Reception directions to be included on the back?

Would you like the couple's new address listed on the back?

The Minister of Music and the priest presiding over your marriage can assist you in picking out hymns and other music. If you are interested in having other musicians participate, you should speak with the Minister of Music. Additional fees are charged when other musicians are used.

PLEASE INCLUDE A LIST OF THE WEDDING PARTY!