



The Church of the Ascension
Rockville Centre, New York

Wedding Policies and Planning Guide

Introduction

The Church of the Ascension views marriage as, first and foremost, a sacrament of the Church. It is an event which is both solemn and joyous for families and friends; it is also an occasion for inviting Jesus Christ to bestow his grace on the union of two individuals. More than a legal contract or a private party, it is a sacred ceremony that takes place in the context of a particular religious faith. All arrangements must be made with this in mind.

It is also important to stress, that marriage in the Christian tradition is seen as a lifelong commitment between two individuals which is symbolic of the union between Christ and his Church. The Church of the Ascension will perform marriages for both opposite-sex and same-sex couples, however, the expectations are the same: a life-long, loving, and monogamous union between two individuals.

1. Couples should be active in attendance before a wedding is planned.

The Church of the Ascension is a Christian community and not a wedding venue. We believe that when marriage is undertaken in the context of the Christian community, vows are taken before God, and Christ's presence is invoked to bless and sanctify the union. It is expected, therefore, that the wedding is a symbol of one's Christian life, an event which points to a couple's commitment to living life in the Church. In other words, the Church is more highly invested in your *marriage* than in your *wedding*. By attending services first, the couple has time to become part of this Christian family, and to appreciate and understand the Anglican approach to worship and sacrament.

We expect that any couple wishing to be married in this church will be regular in attendance for at least three months before a wedding date is selected. Please note that the priest MUST also have a meeting with the intended couple BEFORE a wedding date is even discussed. Please do not "cold call" the church to ask about a date before attending worship here.

While we completely understand that planning weddings can be difficult and involve many moving parts, venues, and interests, it is very important that reception plans be made **AFTER** the date and time of the ceremony has been settled.

2. Remarriage after divorce in the Episcopal Church.

The Episcopal Church holds that marriage is a lifelong bond, and is not to “be entered into unadvisedly, or lightly; but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.” The Church also recognizes that there are times when marriages do not succeed. This is always an occasion for profound sadness, and requires humility of both parties as each acknowledges responsibility for the tragedy. Contrary to popular opinion, there is no such thing as a “no fault” divorce.

Nevertheless, the Church teaches that there is no moral superiority gained by forcing two people to stay together when the sacramental, Christ-manifesting nature of the marriage is gone. Bitterness, anger, and resentment are roadblocks to living out the Christian faith, both as families and as individuals. The Episcopal Church does, therefore, permit remarriage after divorce, under the following conditions:

- No priest of the Church must solemnize such a marriage; it is left to the priest’s discretion and godly judgment.
- Permission must be obtained, in writing, of the bishop of the diocese. This requires a minimum of sixty days.
- The priest must have evidence of a final decree of divorce or nullity.
- The priest must be assured that children of a former marriage [and former spouse, where applicable] are being supported in a manner consistent with the Christian faith.
- Although canon law no longer requires a period of one year between a final decree of divorce or nullity and a remarriage, the rector may, at his own discretion, require a certain period before remarriage.

3. Pre-martial counseling is required.

Couples that wish to be married in the church will need to attend at least three meetings with the priest before the wedding date. These meetings will be a time to discuss not only the marriage plans, but also the relationship of the couple. In some circumstances, the couple may be referred to an outside counselor.

4. Marriage arrangements will only be discussed with the couple.

Plans will be made between the couple, the priest, and the organist and choirmaster **ONLY**. Wedding planners and outside family members will **NOT** be involved in the planning or execution of the Church ceremony.

5. The Service will conform to the Book of Common Prayer.

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage may be found on page 423 of the Book of Common Prayer. Marriages in our church will be conducted according to this liturgy and the vows taken will be the vows from the Prayer Book. Personal (individualized) wedding vows are not permitted. If desired, a couple may choose to use either traditional or contemporary language for the service. Same-sex couples will use the approved liturgy for same-sex weddings. Non-Christian rituals and practices that are not in the tradition or custom of our church will not be approved. Bible readings will be taken from approved translations of the scriptures.

6. About the wedding license.

At your wedding, the priest fulfills two roles: the Church's witness, and an officer of the State of New York. The wedding license must be brought to the rehearsal, or given to the officiant at an earlier date, if possible. After or during the ceremony, the wedding license and the canonical church register will be signed by the betrothed couple and their witnesses.

No priest is permitted to perform a wedding without having the license present. Since they are good for ninety days, it is best to get your license as soon as possible. There is a twenty-four hour waiting period between the issuing of the license and the solemnizing of matrimony.

7. Music at your wedding.

Music during the ceremony must be of a religious nature and appropriate to the occasion. Secular, "popular" songs, no matter how pretty or special in the life of the betrothed couple, are not permitted, and are best saved for the reception.

All music for weddings is under the direction of the Organist and Choirmaster, Mr. Kenneth Dyer, who plays for all weddings at The Church of The Ascension. You must schedule a time to meet with Ken to discuss the musical options. Ken will also arrange for a soloist should you desire. Any requests for outside musicians must be made through the Organist/Choirmaster. Should you wish for another organist (or other instrumentalist) to play in lieu of Mr. Dyer, he still must be paid his professional fees as noted below.

8. Visiting clergy

When requested by the couple, it is possible to have clergy from other denominations participate in the liturgy. Where desired and appropriate, the rector may invite another member of the clergy to assist with the liturgy. All such invitations come from the rector, rather than from the betrothed couple.

9. Flowers

“Flowers” and “wedding” seem to go naturally together. In most cases, however, less is more. The use of flowers in the church is confined to [1] two vases on the High Altar, and, if requested, [2] two additional standing vases or baskets at the choir steps. Flowers and/or ribbons at the end of pews are permitted.

PLEASE NOTE: All flowers for use within the church must come from the church florist: the **Art Flower and Gift Shop, 41 North Village Avenue, Rockville Centre. [Tel. No. 516-766-2461]** The owner, Keith Linsalata and chief designer Debbie Whitfield will be happy to meet with you, and are very knowledgeable about this church, its dimensions, and its liturgy. Other flowers, such as bouquets, corsages, boutonnieres, may be supplied by a florist of your choice. Baskets which “arrive” from other florists for use in the church must, regrettably, be refused.

If you have a flower girl as part of the bridal party, she may carry a miniature bouquet or small basket of flowers. No “scattering” of rose petals, please.

The use of a white “runner” is not permitted, for reasons of safety.

Likewise, there is to be no tossing of rice, birdseed, or flower petals on the steps of the church.

10. Photography

While you will probably want a photographic and/or video recounting of your special day, you don't want the sacredness of the occasion to be marred by bursting flashbulbs and huge, multi-layered tripods of video equipment stalking you down the aisle.

Please inform your photographer that NO FLASH PICTURES are permitted during the ceremony. When the ceremony is over, s/he may “re-pose” as many shots as s/he wishes. The photographer must arrive at the church at least 15 minutes early to learn where s/he is permitted to stand. Photographers are never permitted to step into the center aisle of the church. Photographers are asked to be as inconspicuous as possible. Any photographer who is disrespectful of these rules may be asked to leave.

Videotaping is only permitted with a small camera which requires no additional lighting. Again, the video photographer must arrive at the church fifteen minutes before the ceremony is to begin.

11. Rehearsal

A rehearsal may be scheduled at a time convenient to the rector and the couple. The organist does attend the rehearsal. The rehearsal does not have to take place the day before the wedding; in fact, it is often better to schedule the rehearsal for two days prior to the wedding, to allow the couple and their attendants some additional “breathing space” the day and evening before the big day.

The rehearsal is generally scheduled for 6:00 in the evening, or earlier, with 6:30 at the latest. The couple should give their attendants plenty of notice so that they may arrange to arrive at the church on time.

12. Alcohol Use and On-time Policy

In addition to being a sacred service, a marriage is also a legal contract. In both circumstances it is inappropriate for the service to be conducted if one or more parties is inebriated. If the priest suspects that any member of the wedding party is under the influence of alcohol, or other recreational drugs, he or she has the right to refuse to conduct the ceremony. Save the party until after the service is over.

Also, there is no such thing as “fashionably late.” This is simply disrespect and rudeness. Services will begin at the agreed upon time. Any service that begins more than 15 minutes late will incur an extra \$300 fee. After 30 minutes, the priest may simply close the church and ask the guests to leave. Please plan ahead and be on time.

Fees and Stipends:

For pledging members of the parish:

Church Use Fee: No fee for **active, pledging members**. Donations are accepted.

Pew Torches (if used): \$70

Organist: cash \$250

Soloist (if used): cash \$150 each

Clergy: No clergy fee is expected for **pledging members** of the parish

For non-members, or non-pledging members:

Church Fee: Check payable to The Church of the Ascension \$500

Pew Torches (if used): Add \$70 to above

Organist: cash \$250

Soloist (if used): cash \$150 each

Clergy: cash \$300