

**The
Celebration
And
Blessing
Of A
Marriage**

The Church of the Good Shepherd, Jacksonville, Florida 32204

5-07

The occasion of a church wedding is the sacramental beginning of a Christian marriage intended to reflect God's love in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. In order for the service to reflect the joy, hope and faith of a new life together, it is important that there be careful planning. Following are some of the matters that need to be considered.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

According to *The Book of Common Prayer*, "It is required that one, at least, of the parties 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".

In order to help couples think through the various issues of marriage and prepare them for their new relationship with and in Christ, the Episcopal Church requires that there be premarital instruction and that at least 60 days notice be given for that purpose. The intent of the counseling is to deepen the relationship between the couple and the church, to examine the various aspects of the couple's own relationship, and to assist the couple in preparing for a lifelong Christian marriage. The premarital counseling usually requires four to five meetings with the officiating clergy. In the case of a divorced person, the priest must receive the permission of the Bishop before the wedding may be performed. Therefore, 90 days notice is normally required and no plans may be finalized until the Bishop's permission is secured. The Church does not stand in judgment as to the reasons for the failure of a previous marriage, but it does try to make sure that any future union is sound and that there is a good probability for a lifelong union.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Good Shepherd is a family gathered together in Jesus Christ. As such, we wish to make every effort to assist a new family in their growth and to nurture their walk with Christ.

When a couple wishes to be married at Good Shepherd, either the bride or the groom must be a part of our parish family. They may have a long standing affiliation or they may be looking to Good Shepherd at this time to begin an enduring relationship.

A minimum of 60 days notice must be given to allow sufficient time for pre-marital counseling and thorough planning. During this period, our understanding of the marriage and the

relationship of the couple to Good Shepherd is explored. If, after this initial period, the couple and the counseling priest determine to proceed with the marriage, the couple is expected to begin an active and committed relationship with the parish as participating and contributing members. Members of other Episcopal parishes should transfer their memberships to Good Shepherd. Anyone new to the Episcopal Church is expected to attend the next scheduled session of Inquirer's Classes. Christian marriage is undertaken in the context and with the support of a worshipping congregation. The entire parish stands ready to welcome those who wish to make their family a part of ours.

Episcopal clergy from other churches may officiate or assist at a wedding in the parish if arrangements are made with the Rector. Clergy of other denominations or faiths may be invited to assist with a wedding ceremony, with concurrence of the Rector. The Rector will be responsible for officiating at the portion of the service in which partners exchange vows and rings and at the final blessing.

It is customary for the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage to be conducted in the context of the Holy Eucharist as provided for in *The Book of Common Prayer*. This enables the couple and congregation to celebrate and participate in the mystery of the union between Christ and His church, which Christian marriage signifies. However, under some circumstances, it may be desirable to have only the wedding service itself. All arrangements are subject to the approval of the Rector.

CIVIL REQUIREMENTS

Every couple wishing to be married has to obtain a marriage license from a county courthouse or other alternative provided by the state. The license, once issued, is good for 60 days and may be used anywhere in the state. If one of the parties has been divorced within 30 days, the divorce papers must be presented at the time the couple applies for the license. The couple must apply together and each must produce one form of identification (drivers license, state I.D. card, birth certificate, military I.D., passport) as well as their social security cards.

THE BLESSING OF A CIVIL MARRIAGE

The Book of Common Prayer provides a service for those who have been married in the presence of a civil, rather than a church, authority. The service provides for a blessing in the church and includes the exchange of vows as well as the giving and receiving of rings. Those who desire such a ceremony must make arrangements with the Rector and parish office for such to take place.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR USE OF THE CHURCH

The time and day for a wedding ceremony must be scheduled through the parish office in conjunction with the Rector. Normally weddings are not performed during Lent, especially during Holy Week. Once the date has been finalized, arrangements shall be made for a consultation with Good Shepherd's Wedding Committee. If an outside wedding consultant is being employed, this person will work under the direction of the committee. Please consult the

various directives in this folder covering fees, music, flowers, photography.

At no time may alcoholic beverages be brought onto the Church premises. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to inform the wedding party of this policy. For Receptions in Craig or Worsham Hall, the Rector must approve the provision of alcoholic beverages.

Information regarding the use of any part of the Good Shepherd facility for a wedding reception is available through the parish office.

“.....marriage 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 Book of Common Prayer