

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage

The Church of the Good Shepherd, Jacksonville, Florida 32204

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. We welcome your interest in having your wedding at Good Shepherd.

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 to prepare them for their new relationship with and in Christ, the Episcopal Church requires that there be three hours of premarital instruction, usually done by the priest presiding at the wedding. In the case of a divorced person, the priest must receive the permission of the Bishop before the wedding date may be set. Therefore, 90 days notice is normally required and no plans may be finalized until the Bishop's permission is secured.

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.

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 the parish office for such to take place.