

GETTING MARRIED IN THE CHURCH

A GUIDE FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF HOLY CROSS ANGLICAN CHURCH

Your wedding day should be remembered forever as one of the most significant, joyous and sacred occasions in your life. Holy Matrimony is a sacrament of love, promise and grace as you pledge before God to live out the rest of your lives as one. Beautiful music, flowers and happiness fill the entire celebration. But as wonderful as the wedding day is, it is only the beginning of a life lived out together in love and faith.

Holy Cross Anglican Church and its pastor are committed to helping you enter into a truly Christian marriage and to establish a loving home. Because marriage is a serious life-long commitment, it requires careful thought, planning and preparation.

Holy Matrimony is a sacrament of the Church and is administered to couples that have both been baptized, with at least one partner that is a practicing Anglican. It is not merely a Service for couples that would like a "church wedding." Because Christian marriage is intended to be a lifelong relationship, significant preparation is required. The pastor of the church should be consulted before any plans are made, or a firm wedding date set.

If you have not been actively practicing your faith, are not a member of the church, or are not yet a baptized Christian, that need not prevent you from being married in the church. This is a wonderful time to turn to Jesus Christ in faith, and to begin to faithfully live the Christian life as a member of God's Church.

The pastor may not marry any couple or bless any previous civil marriage except in accordance with the canons (laws) of the Church. It is also within his discretion to decline to marry any couple.

Those being married in the church will be married according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church. Neither the clergy nor the laity have authority to change the Church's Marriage Service, or to substitute something else in its place.

If one or both parties have previously been married and their former spouse is still living, the case must be referred to the bishop who will determine whether the couple can be married in the church.

The pastor generally requires six months of preparation before the wedding takes place. For good cause, and at the discretion of the pastor, the time of preparation can be shortened. In any case, the couple, or at least the Anglican partner, will be required to faithfully attend Sunday Services at Holy Cross Anglican Church while

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preparing for marriage, and the couple will be required to meet regularly with the pastor for pre-marital counseling. Our pastor, Father Victor Novak, has been married to his wife Cheri for some twenty-seven years, and has the experience as a Christian husband and father to help prepare you for married life. After the marriage ceremony is performed, the couple will be expected to establish a Christian home, live Christian lives, and to continue to faithfully attend Sunday Worship.

Prior to the wedding, the couple will be required to read, agree to, and sign the following declaration:

We, _____ and _____, desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. We believe it is for the purpose of the procreation (if it may be) of children, and their spiritual and physical nurture, for mutual fellowship, encouragement, and understanding, and for the safeguarding and benefit of society, and we do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make the utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God's help thereto.

The solemnization of Holy Matrimony (the Marriage Service) may take place in a church or some other suitable location approved by the pastor, and

the bride and groom are free (with the guidance of the pastor) to suitably decorate the facility for the liturgy (Service). The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony as found in the Book of Common Prayer will be used for the Service. If the couple are communicants of the Church, the pastor will generally recommend that the Wedding include the Order for Holy Communion. The couple may select appropriate music for the Service (with the guidance of the pastor), and are responsible for providing an organist or other musician(s) if desired. The pastor may be able to aid in securing an organist if so requested by the couple. "It shall be his [the pastor's] duty to suppress all light and unseemly music, and all irreverence in the performance" (1940 Hymnal).

The bride, groom and their attendants must be appropriately and modestly dressed. Men should wear a coat and tie or tuxedo, while the women should wear dresses or skirts. The liturgical color for the Solemnization of Holy Matrimony is white.

There must be at least two competent witnesses other than the Minister, and the laws of the State must be adhered to. There is no charge for the Service, but wedding stipends, or donations, are properly given to the presiding clergy and to others who assist at the liturgy. Stipends are not necessary for lectors or others who assist if they are chosen from among

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the wedding guests. Stipends should be commensurate with the amount of time various individuals have contributed to the event.

Having read this document, please contact the pastor and make an appointment to sit down and talk with him about your wedding plans. You will find him happy to work with you. Father Novak, can be reached by phone at (402) 573-6558 or by e-mail at: venovak@hughes.net

This article was written by Father V. E. Novak. For more of his articles visit his Parish website at: www.holycrossomaha.net.