



WEDDINGS AT ST. CHRISTOPHER'S CHURCH

Marriage in God's Holy Church is referred to as Holy Matrimony. It is different from marriage outside the Church, in faith, heart, spirit, and actuality. As a Sacrament, Christian marriage is a solemn and public, faithful and lifelong covenant between one man and one woman (only), entered into in the presence of God, and lived out with the support of a community of faith—the Church.

More than simply a man and a woman deciding they want to be married, Holy Matrimony is grounded in the belief that the couple's relationship is God's desire and will, and that He is joining them for life—a life with God, under God, and in His holiness. Likewise, the ceremony itself contains biblically-based expressions that describe what marriage in Christ is to be. Marriage in the Church is about faith and holiness, nurtured in joy and gratitude. As our Book of Common Prayer states: "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 Church's role continues throughout the couple's marriage, well beyond the wedding day. In fact, it continues for life, as those who are married in the Church are supported and encouraged by the Body of Christ.

If a couple desires to be married in the Church, there should be a corresponding desire to continue active participation in the life of the Church. The Church is not a stage-set or a mere venue for a wedding; it is the house of God, and proper respect and honor are appropriate.

What is required to enter into Holy Matrimony? The Canons of our Church (rules) require, minimally, that one of the bride or groom be a baptized Christian. At St. Christopher's, we prefer that both be baptized, and are glad to do that if a bride or groom is willing. In addition, membership in this parish, or a family relationship or friendship with a parishioner will be required for a wedding to be held at St. Christopher's Church, unless otherwise approved by the Rector. Also, the couple will be required to attend a worship service here, one or more times before the wedding.

Premarital Counseling

Premarital counseling is required of all couples presenting themselves for Holy Matrimony. The Rector will prescribe the course of counseling, the number of sessions (usually 3 to 4), and the content, giving consideration to couple's particular needs and circumstances. Please understand that the *counseling sessions must be completed before announcements and invitations of the wedding are distributed to guests*, as final written approval of the Rector is required after considering any evaluation made following the premarital counseling sessions.

Marriage After Divorce

Episcopal Canon Law prohibits clergy from solemnizing the marriage of anyone who has been divorced, except with the consent of the Bishop. If either or both the man and woman have been divorced, a meeting with the Rector should be held immediately to ascertain the circumstances of the dissolution of the previous marriage. Thereafter, the Rector will consult with the Bishop to obtain a ruling in the matter.

The Marriage License

The man and woman wishing to marry must comply with the laws of New York State by obtaining a marriage license. Further, the marriage license must be presented to the officiating priest at least 3 days before the wedding day. If no license is presented, a marriage ceremony cannot be performed—*without exception*. It is against the law to perform a wedding ceremony in the physical absence of a marriage license.

The Wedding Rehearsal

The purpose of the wedding rehearsal is for the bride, groom, and their wedding party and family to familiarize themselves with the church, the ceremony, the music, the processional and the recessional, and all the other elements of this joyful service. The purpose of the rehearsal is to help the wedding go smoothly, and to put everyone at ease. One hour is allotted for the rehearsal, which usually is held in the early evening, the day before the wedding. It is important for the entire wedding party to be on time for the rehearsal, and to be attentive to requests and instructions, so that the hour is used to the fullest. The priest is the director of the rehearsal and the ceremony because Holy Matrimony is a Sacrament; the service must be conducted in accord with the Canons and rubrics of this Church. While the priest will be gracious and helpful, please note that *bridal consultants are not permitted to direct the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony*.

The Wedding Ceremony

As a Sacrament of the Church, Holy Matrimony is a blessing performed in the context of worship. If outside clergy are to participate, *advance permission of the Rector is required*. Our wedding liturgy is taken from the Book of Common Prayer and all liturgy, vows, readings and prayers are to be in accordance with the Prayer Book and the canons and policies of this church and Diocese. Any outside readings or other spoken or written words may only be used where appropriate, upon the advance approval of the Rector or the Bishop. If Holy Communion is desired as part of the service, all baptized Christians shall be invited to take part.

The Ceremony Music

The bride and groom are encouraged to participate in the selection of music for their wedding. The Rector or the parish musician may assist as needed. An organist selected by St. Christopher's Church will play at all weddings, unless otherwise approved by the Rector. The fee for the organist's services is determined by the organist. Other musicians and singers are welcome to participate, upon approval of the Rector. Because Holy Matrimony is a Sacrament of the Church, *all music shall be Christian sacred music and shall be subject to the Rector's advance approval.*

Donations and Fees

As a Sacrament of the Church, marriage is offered by the priest without charge. In thanksgiving for their marriage, many couples choose to make a contribution to the Rector's Discretionary Fund, which the priest uses for the benefit of pious and charitable needs. This is optional, but customary. Additionally, a nominal clean-up fee of \$25 is charged, as well as the above stated fee for the organist. A charge of \$100 for the use of the church will be made to non-members.

Contact Us

To contact the Rector about your wedding at St. Christopher's Church, please call the Church Office at 518-234-3912 or email stchrisoffice@gmail.com. Best wishes, and congratulations!