

# Preparing for Your Wedding



A Guide from Christ Church, Coronado

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## Introduction

At Christ Church, we are honored to participate in the formation of new Christian families through the celebration and blessing of marriages. When a couple comes forward to be united in Holy Matrimony, it is a moment of profound joy and thanksgiving for the entire parish community. Our role is to support this sacred occasion—enhancing the celebration, facilitating the ceremony, and helping to ensure that the marriage begins on a strong and faithful foundation.

Achieving these goals requires thoughtful preparation and collaboration among the church, the engaged couple, and their families and friends. While our customs and traditions surrounding Holy Matrimony are deeply rooted in sacramental theology and Anglican liturgical heritage, we also recognize that contemporary societal expectations often diverge from this theological framework.

Therefore, we offer this guide both as a resource for planning a wedding at Christ Church and as an invitation to engage with the rich theological and spiritual meaning of Christian marriage. It is our hope that this guide will provide not only practical information but also a deeper understanding of the sacred commitment being undertaken.

To begin, Christian marriage is defined in the Book of Common Prayer (page 422) as a solemn and public covenant in the presence of God. This emphasis upon covenant relationship as opposed to legal contract underscores the high seriousness with which the church addresses marriage. It calls for the same kind of mystical union enjoyed by God and his people Israel and by Christ and his Church. It 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 (BCP., page 423).

Once the depth of religious significance that the Episcopal Church places on the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is fully understood, the Church's expectations and traditions surrounding the marriage rite become clearly coherent. In fact, nearly all potential conflicts related to the ceremony can be avoided when all involved continually keep in mind one guiding principle: the liturgy of the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage is a service of worship within the Church, akin to Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist.

As such, a church wedding is neither a private event nor a personalized celebration. It does not primarily exalt the ideal of romantic love between two individuals but rather proclaims and participates in the enduring bond of love between Christ and His Church. Marriage, while not required of any Christian, is a sacred and sacramental relationship.

## Marriage in the Episcopal Church

While canonical requirements allow for considerable flexibility, certain restrictions must still be observed.

- ✓ At least one member of the couple must be a baptized Christian.
- ✓ At least two witnesses must be present.
- ✓ The couple must complete a suitable premarital counseling program as part of their preparation for Holy Matrimony.
- ✓ The couple must affirm that they freely and knowingly consent to the marriage and regard it as a lifelong union, as defined in the liturgical forms authorized by the Church.
- ✓ All laws of the state must be honored.

If either party to the proposed marriage has ever been married, the Rector may not proceed with a wedding without the Bishop's written consent.

This process may take up to sixty days. As the Bishop's consent is not to be presumed, no wedding date may be set, nor banns published, until official authorization has been granted. If either party has been previously married and the former spouse is still living, a certified copy of the final divorce decree must be submitted to the Rector. The Rector is then required to confirm to the Bishop that this documentation has been received.

## Planning a Wedding at Christ Church

The first step in planning your wedding at Christ Church is to contact the Rector. During this initial conversation, you'll discuss your intentions, explore any special considerations, and arrange for premarital counseling. Please wait to announce or confirm a wedding date until it has been officially approved by the Rector to avoid any scheduling conflicts or misunderstandings.

Once your wedding date is confirmed, the next step is to meet with both the Parish Wedding Guild and the Music Director. These meetings are an opportunity to plan the details of your ceremony and express your personal preferences. The Wedding Guild will serve as a dedicated guide and source of support for you and your families throughout the entire planning process and on the wedding day itself.

**Important Note:** Christ Church does not allow outside wedding consultants to manage or direct the ceremony.

If you wish to host a rehearsal dinner or wedding reception at Christ Church, please contact both the Office Manager and the Facility Manager to check the availability of church facilities and make the necessary arrangements.

## Premarital Counseling

Premarital counseling is an essential part of preparation for Holy Matrimony at Christ Church. While the format and content of counseling may vary depending on the needs of the couple and the approach of the Rector, a clear plan will be established during the couple's initial meeting with the Rector.

In some cases, particularly when one or both individuals reside outside the area, the Rector may delegate the counseling to a trusted and qualified individual closer to the couple's location.

Please note: Participation in a suitable premarital counseling program is not optional. The wedding will not proceed without its satisfactory completion.

## Floral Arrangements and Other Decorations

Floral arrangements for weddings at Christ Church should reflect the same principles as those used during other worship services, aligning with the liturgical season in which the wedding takes place. While a wedding is a joyful celebration, it does not take precedence over the Church's principal feasts such as Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and other major Holy Days. All decorations must contribute to the worshipful atmosphere of the church and should not distract from its sacred purpose.

Artificial flowers are not permitted. A single floral arrangement may be placed in front of the Altar. Additional decorative elements—such as candle stands, flower stands, kneeling benches, aisle runners, pots, or urns—may be used but must be coordinated with the Facility Manager.

To preserve the church building and furnishings, no tacks, nails, pins, screws, or tape may be used to affix decorations. Furthermore, for safety and maintenance reasons, rice, confetti, bubbles, or other objects may not be thrown anywhere on church property.

During Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, the church is adorned with extensive seasonal decorations. The Wedding Guild Director can provide information about these arrangements and how they may affect your wedding plans during these times.

Because Lent is a season focused on spiritual growth and penitence, weddings are generally not held between Ash Wednesday and Easter Day. Additionally, due to the extensive liturgical preparations required for major feasts and fasts, Christ Church is not available for weddings on:

- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- Ash Wednesday
- Palm Sunday or the Saturday preceding
- Any day of Holy Week
- Easter Day
- Pentecost or the Saturday preceding

## Photography and Videography Guidelines

Photographers are typically permitted to take pictures of the wedding party prior to the ceremony. No photographs may be taken during the wedding ceremony from the nave of the church. However, as the bride and groom exit down the aisle, the photographer may take photos without flash from the Narthex (main entrance) door. Only photographers engaged by the bride and groom are authorized to take photographs during the ceremony.

If the couple desires a photograph with the officiating Rector, please ensure to request that the Rector remain after the service for the photo.

For those wishing to video the ceremony, any placement of cameras or changes to the lighting must be prearranged with the Rector and the Facility Manager.

It is essential that photographers are fully informed of our policies in advance to avoid any misunderstandings or disruptions on the day of the wedding. Once the prelude music begins, no photographs may be taken until after the ceremony is complete and the guests have had an opportunity to exit.

The Wedding Guild and photographer should have a meeting prior to the wedding day to review these policies and ensure a smooth process.

Please refrain from placing the photographer in a difficult position by requesting actions or decisions that have not been approved by the Wedding Guild.

## Special Requests

If the couple wishes to make special arrangements for music, decorations, or any other elements, we strongly encourage them to consult with us prior to making any arrangements. While we strive to be accommodating, there may be occasions where we are unable to fulfill a particular request. In such cases, we will gladly provide an explanation.

Difficulties often arise when a couple or a family member makes changes or additions to the wedding plans without consulting the staff responsible for the arrangements. To ensure everything runs smoothly, we ask that all modifications be discussed and approved by the appropriate personnel in advance.

## Acolytes

If desired, Christ Church can provide acolytes for the wedding ceremony. However, only those who are trained and currently serve at Christ Church may be selected to participate in the service.

## Wedding Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal is typically scheduled for the evening before the ceremony. All individuals who have a role in the service are expected to attend. Punctuality is essential, as the rehearsal cannot begin until everyone is present. Each participant, including the couple, will rehearse their specific role in the ceremony.

It is mandatory for all key participants in the ceremony to attend the rehearsal. Only those directly involved in the wedding ceremony should be present, as the presence of others can often be distracting during the rehearsal.

The Rector, assisted by the Wedding Guild, will conduct the rehearsal. Outside bridal consultants are not required and are not permitted to provide any consultation regarding the liturgical aspects of the service.

The marriage license must be presented to the Rector at this time for safekeeping, as a valid license is required for the ceremony to take place.

## Wedding Rehearsal or Wedding Reception Dinner

A reception following the rehearsal or wedding ceremony may be held in the parish hall or, weather permitting, in the courtyard. To reserve these spaces, it is required to make arrangements as soon as the wedding date has been set. The Facility Manager will meet with the couple and their caterer to coordinate.

The kitchen is available exclusively for the serving of foods that have been prepared in advance. The parish and its staff are not held responsible for the property of the wedding party or the caterer. The caterer is responsible for ensuring that the kitchen, courtyard and parish hall are left in the same condition in which they were found. If the couple wishes to use the kitchen, parish hall or the courtyard, they must employ the parish facility manager for clean-up services. However, the facility manager is not in the employ of the caterer for service duties; serving personnel must be provided as needed. To allow sufficient time for cleaning before Sunday morning services, we respectfully request that the reception end by midnight.

## Use of Parish Hall and Additional Services

If the couple requires use of the parish hall on the evening before the wedding, the parish office must be contacted at (619) 435-4561 as far in advance as possible. The order of service leaflet or programs will be printed in the parish office and all necessary information for the leaflet must be submitted to the parish office administrator no less than two weeks prior to the ceremony.

If requested, Banns of Marriage may be published up to three weeks before the ceremony. Prayers of thanksgiving for the couple will be offered by the congregation during the week following the ceremony. For parishioners, prayers of thanksgiving will be offered each year on the anniversary of their marriage.

The couple agrees to reimburse Christ Church for any damage to church property resulting from the actions of the wedding party, guests, or those employed to carry out services during the wedding and/or reception.

## Wedding Music

Recognizing that a wedding is, above all, a service of worship, all music chosen for the ceremony must be appropriate to the sacred nature of the occasion. At Christ Church, we strive to honor the musical tastes and preferences of the couple while upholding the liturgical and spiritual integrity of the service.

The Parish Music Director plays for all weddings held at Christ Church and must be consulted early in the planning process. If the couple wishes to include a particular soloist or additional musicians, arrangements must be made in consultation with the Music Director. The primary instrument for services at Christ Church is the organ.

It is important to remember that the ultimate standard for selecting music is not its beauty, popularity, or personal significance, but its suitability for Christian worship. The final decision regarding music rests with the Parish Music Director, in collaboration with the Rector.

Some secular selections that may not be appropriate for the wedding liturgy may still be fitting for other events, such as the rehearsal dinner or reception. This approach allows the couple to incorporate meaningful music while preserving the sanctity of the worship service.

## Wedding Reservation and Fees Policy

For individuals who are not members of Christ Church, a non-refundable deposit of \$500.00 is required to secure a wedding date on the Parish Calendar. This deposit will be applied toward the total non-member fee of \$2,000.00. The full payment should be made payable to Christ Episcopal Church and submitted to the Parish Administrator no later than three weeks prior to the wedding date for proper disbursement.

No Fee:

Clergy

Pre-Marital Counseling

Wedding Guild

Acolytes

Fee's Required:

Music Director

Church (Max # of Guest 250) Rehearsal & Wedding Ceremony

Facility Manager/Custodial

Administration

Ceremony Supplies

Audio/Visual Equipment

Members of Christ Church are only responsible for fees related to custodial and music services. While not required, donations are welcomed and appreciated.

PROGRAMS: standard 8.5 x 11 black and white wedding booklet program. \* Format includes everything from the Book of Common Prayer and music inserted into the program (BCP and Hymnal will not be required during service with this layout).

WEDDING MUSIC FEES: Standard Wedding includes the following services: A consultation to plan all musical elements of the service, including hymns, service music, and instrumental selections

- Preparation of all musical materials for inclusion in the wedding service leaflet
- Securing of copyright permissions as required for printed music in the service leaflet
- Arrangement, rehearsal, and performance of organ music for the wedding ceremony

#### ADDITIONAL WEDDING MUSIC FEES

Wedding with additional soloists \$250 per soloist and/or Parish Choir \$1,000

This includes everything listed under Standard Wedding, as well as planning and rehearsal time.

If you have any questions or need assistance completing the wedding questionnaire, contact Grace, Office Manager (619) 365-8836 or Pam, Parish Administrator (619) 435-4561.