



Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant in the presence of God. As such, marriage is a sacrament of the church. A marriage ceremony must be attested to by two witnesses, and must conform to the laws of Maryland and the canons of this church.

### *Preparation*

1) When a couple decides to be married, they should contact the rector, Father John Schaeffer, to discuss their plans before any other arrangements are made. At least thirty days advance notice is required. No final decision about solemnization of the marriage in the church can be made until the couple and the rector have met at least once. To contact Fr. John please call the church office or email him at: [fatherjohn@stmaryanne.org](mailto:fatherjohn@stmaryanne.org).

2) If one or both of the parties have had a previous marriage dissolved by annulment or divorce, it is necessary to obtain the permission of the bishop, in consultation with the rector, using the forms provided.

Rules on Divorce: Divorced persons are welcome at the altar rail to receive the Holy Eucharist. Children in a divorced family can be presented for Baptism. This does not mean that divorce is taken lightly in the Episcopal Church. We consider divorce to be a grave reality, and your Episcopal priest will want to talk and pray with you. But we recognize that sometimes marriages break down, and we try to make God's love known in these painful situations. Our hope is that the sacraments of the church can bring peace and strength, especially when life is challenging.

Divorced persons are permitted to remarry in the Episcopal Church, and the church does not require an annulment. However, the priest will want to make sure that each person understands the issues that lead to the divorce with hope, that the new marriage will last a lifetime.

3) At least one of the parties must be baptized. Since the church views marriage as a sacramental relationship which is nourished by the community of faith, it is expected that the couple worship regularly with this or some other church community.

4) Both parties must sign the Declaration of Intention as required by the canons of the church.

5) A valid marriage license must be obtained from the Clerk of the Circuit Court in Cecil County, 129 E. Main St., Elkton, MD. (410-996-5379). *The license should be given to the rector at the wedding rehearsal.*

6) Normally, a minimum of three sessions of preparatory conversation with the rector are required.

## *The Wedding Ceremony*

- 1) The marriage service, found on page 423 of the Book of Common Prayer is normally used. Certain adaptations are possible and can be discussed with the rector.
- 2) Our Director of Music, or a person approved by him, will normally play at all weddings. The couple should meet with him to choose music. Remember that a wedding is a religious service, so much popular music is not appropriate. Soloists and instrumentalists may be used under the direction of the Director of Music and the rector.
- 3) Rehearsals (usually the night before the ceremony) are usually necessary in order to make the ceremony go smoothly. All people involved in the wedding ceremony should attend.
- 4) The vestry house next to the church is available for use, but must be left clean and in order. All personal items should be removed after the ceremony. Food and drink (other than water) is not permitted in the vestry house. There is a bathroom in the vestry house for the use of the wedding party and guests. There is no smoking permitted in the vestry house.
- 5) Photos. Since the wedding is a worship service, no flash photos or special lighting is allowed except during the entry and exit of the wedding party. Non-flash photography is allowed during the service from the balcony or the back of the church. Posed photos may be taken after the ceremony, but a time limit should be adhered to.
- 6). Flowers and other appropriate decorations may be placed in the church, but must be removed after the ceremony. Flowers may be given for use on the church altar after the ceremony; please have the florist use the church vases.
- 7) Restrictions:
  - Marriages are not normally celebrated in the Lenten season.
  - The use of a “unity candle” is not normally included in the Episcopal marriage service.
  - Use of confetti and rice is forbidden.
  - The church and the vestry house, and the grounds surrounding the church, must be left clean and in good order. All personal items must be taken, and items not wanted must be disposed of.
- 8) Participation of other clergy who are friends of the bride and groom is possible and should be discussed with the rector well in advance of the ceremony.

### ***Donations & Fees***

Active members of St Mary Anne's: There is no charge for the use of the church and the services of the clergy for active or pledging parishioners of St Mary Anne's, and their immediate families. However, thank offerings to the church and honorarium to the clergy are appropriate, if so desired.

The fee for the organist: \$300.00

For all others: The congregation expects that those who are not church members will contribute an appropriate amount for the use of the church for a wedding. An appropriate donation is based on the size and elaborateness of the wedding ceremony, rehearsal, etc., but a minimum donation is usually \$500.00. The rector will spend at least 8-10 hours in preparation for the wedding, taking time away from his other duties, so it is expected that the rector should receive a gift of \$300.00.

Polices revised: June 2015

### ***Wedding Music***

A wedding is an especially joyous occasion in the liturgical setting, and selection of appropriate music can enhance the service to provide incomparable memories for years to come. At St. Mary Anne's, the best of sacred and classical music is utilized, and we believe that secular and/or popular music should be reserved exclusively for the reception. Contact our Director of Music, to discuss appropriate music selections.