

GRACE EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL

A Customary for Weddings

General Statements

“Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God” (BCP 422). The texts and rubrics of the marriage rite, together with the instructions “Concerning the Service” and “Additional Directions,” all work to support the Church’s proclamation of Holy Matrimony as a lifelong and unconditional union of husband and wife (BCP 422-438). This Customary is meant to underscore and facilitate this proclamation in this parish as well.

Because weddings are public sacramental celebrations, which also convey civil standing, they must be conducted by the parish clergy according to the Book of Common Prayer, the Canons of the Episcopal Church (I.18) and the laws of the State. Additionally, the clergy must know that the couple is eligible to be married in accordance with the teachings of the Church and the laws of the State. Given these requirements, it is considered appropriate to limit weddings to those persons who are known to be members of this parish. (Exceptions to this policy may be made from time to time at the discretion of the Dean. If an exception is made, higher fees will apply.)

The Church understands Holy Matrimony to be marriage celebrated and blessed by the Church for the purpose of mutual fellowship, encouragement and understanding, for the procreation of children (in normal situations), and their physical and spiritual nurture and for the safeguarding and benefit of society (I.18.3d). Holy Matrimony is therefore appropriate only for those who intend to seek God’s help and that of the Church in this undertaking. Accordingly, couples will be asked to sign a Declaration of Intention in which they claim this understanding for themselves.

In addition, Church canons require that at least one party be a baptized Christian and that the couple has been instructed “as to the nature, meaning, and purpose of Holy Matrimony” (I.18.4).

In the case where one of the parties intending to marry has previously been married to another person still living, it will be necessary to present the situation to the Bishop for review and permission to proceed. The Bishop requires that at least one of the parties be a member of the parish, that at least one year has passed since the divorce became final (a copy of the decree will be required), that no party to the intended marriage has had more than one previous marriage end in divorce*, and be satisfied that the divorced party has exercised appropriate continuing concern for the former spouse and the children (if any) from the previous marriage (I.19.3).

**Subsequent marriages are considered by the Bishop on a case-by-case basis.*

To meet the requirements set above, that is, to complete counseling and instruction, service planning (including the availability of parish facilities and clergy), and obtaining any necessary permissions and licenses, the parish requests (and generally requires) a minimum of three to four months advance notice. A couple should plan to meet with a member of the Cathedral clergy or some other appointed person a minimum of four to six hours. Do not set a firm wedding date before meeting with the clergy.

By long tradition in the Episcopal Church, weddings are not scheduled during Lent except in extreme circumstances. Weddings are also discouraged during the season of Advent.

The Liturgy

The Prayer Book provides three wedding services - the Blessing and Celebration of a Marriage, the Blessing of a Civil Marriage, and an Order for Marriage - and a variety of options within them (BCP 423, 433, 435). All weddings are planned according to these rites by the couple with the parish clergy; a “wedding consultant” or outside coordinator is neither appropriate nor needed.

As with all forms of liturgy, it is appropriate and desirable for the laity to participate fully in the marriage ceremony. At a wedding, persons other than parish lay readers may be invited by the parish clergy to read lessons, begin the psalm, or lead prayers. The parish clergy will be happy to discuss with the couple to whom it would be appropriate for such an invitation to be extended.

Likewise, if the couple desires other clergy persons to assist in the wedding, this will need to be discussed with the officiating Cathedral clergy, who will issue the appropriate invitations. Please do not make any prior commitments or extend any invitations without first discussing this with the Cathedral clergy. Of course, all persons scheduled to be involved will need to be present at a rehearsal the evening before the wedding is to take place.

Music

If you desire music for your wedding, all arrangements should be made in advance with the Cathedral’s Music Director. The Music Director, or his assistant, generally plays for weddings in the Cathedral or St. Mary’s Chapel.

Since weddings in the Episcopal Church are services of public worship, the guidelines listed in the *Book of Common Prayer* concerning music apply. These guidelines suggest that, “Hymns and anthems are to be understood as those authorized by this Church. The words are to be from Holy Scripture, or from the Prayer Book, or from texts congruent with them” (BCP 14). Accordingly, secular songs, popular songs, love songs, etc., are generally considered inappropriate for the wedding service.

Each couple meets with the Music Director to plan their wedding music. At this meeting, you will have an opportunity to hear musical selections appropriate for processions in and out of the Cathedral as well as special music, hymns, and solos, if desired. This meeting usually takes between 30 and 45 minutes. Call the Music Director at your earliest convenience to schedule this planning meeting.

If you desire a vocal soloist or instrumentalist, the Music Director will be happy to discuss these options with you at your planning meeting. The Cathedral has several fine musicians available that are familiar with our space and traditions, or you may already know of someone you would like to have for your wedding. In either case, advance planning and music selection is necessary to guarantee success.

(Also, see “The Lord’s Prayer” under *Special Notes*).

Decorations

The church worship space may be decorated as for any other parish celebration during a festal season (no extra flowers, no extra candles). Flowers will be arranged in the parish vases for placement by the florist in coordination with the verger. The verger is in charge of all decorations to the church building. Any special decorations will require the explicit approval of the Dean.

Picture-taking and videotaping

No picture taking or videotaping is allowed in the church during the service: this includes the use of cellular phones to take digital

images (see *Special Notes*, page 6). Marriage is a solemn occasion and a service of worship. Photographers and their equipment can be distracting, disruptive, and irreverent. It is your responsibility to inform your photographer as well as your guests in advance concerning this matter. Photography or recording of any kind will not be tolerated and, if necessary, the service will be stopped until the photography equipment can be removed. Couples are strongly encouraged to arrange to have all formal photography completed no later than 45 minutes prior to the ceremony. The clergy will be happy to assist and/or participate in these sessions, but need to be informed in advance as to when they should be present and dressed.

***For exceptions see *Special Notes*.

The Rehearsal

A rehearsal is required for every wedding ceremony scheduled to take place at the Cathedral; it is customary (although not required) that the rehearsal take place on the evening before the wedding. All persons participating in the wedding, including the bride and groom, are expected to attend and to be on time. The rehearsal will take about 40 to 60 minutes and such timing should be taken into consideration when planning post-rehearsal dinners or other festivities.

Receptions at the Church

The Great Hall is available to **active** members of the parish for receptions of up to 300 persons (standing) or up to 160 for a sit-down dinner. If alcoholic beverages are to be served, the wedding party must provide a written insurance rider from their insurance carrier and provide a copy of this rider to the Cathedral one week prior to the reception itself. The wedding party also assumes all responsibility for ensuring that the serving and consumption of alcohol is done in a responsible manner: non-alcoholic beverages must be made available. The intoxication of any individual at any time is unacceptable. Champagne, wine or beer may be served, but hard liquor is prohibited. Under no circumstances are open containers of alcohol to be taken from the building at any time by anyone, and alcohol may not be consumed on the grounds or in the parking lot of the Cathedral.

If the clergy, organist, verger, or any other representative of the parish (and their spouses) are expected at any dinners, receptions or parties, they need to be sent an invitation like everyone else.

Superstitions and Other Practices

Superstitions, such as the bride not participating in the rehearsal, are unfounded and have no place in the ministries of the Church. In addition, “add-on” symbolic acts (the lighting of a “unity candle,” etc.) are not a part of the traditions of the Church and detract from the historic symbols provided by the service, and so are not permitted.

No rice or birdseed please! We ask that you please respect our grounds and substitute bubbles or some other “disappearing” substance for the traditional throwing of rice on the bride and groom. Birdseed is not an acceptable substitute. We do not want to encourage birds to eat here and then feel welcomed enough to make their home in the Cathedral’s towers. (That creates a whole other problem!)

Special Notes

*There are no fees for weddings held in the context of Sunday morning worship. However, the lessons and music shall be those appointed by the lectionary for the day. Sunday morning weddings shall be limited to active members of Grace Cathedral.

**The clergy reserves the right to refuse to perform any marriage ceremony.

*** Concerning picture-taking and videotaping - the following exceptions may be made to the ban on photography, videography, and other forms of recording during the service. First, one photographer designated by the wedding party may take pictures of the wedding party as they enter the nave during the opening procession. Second, one photographer designated by the wedding party may take pictures of the wedding party as they leave the nave during the departing procession. Third, one photographer designated by the wedding party may take pictures of the ceremony from the rear balcony using available light (no flash). Fourth, one videographer designated by the wedding party may use a stationary video camera to record the ceremony, using available light, either from the rear balcony of the east chancel door (or both). It is recommended that the photographer and/or videographer designated by the wedding party be a professional and that s/he be present at the rehearsal to discuss the details of the ceremony with the officiating clergy and the vergers. In all situations, the clergy and/or vergers will have the final authority regarding all decisions having to do with photography, videography, and other forms of recording.

**** The Lord's Prayer is a community prayer and, therefore, is to be sung or said by the congregation as a whole, just as it is in all our worship services. It is inappropriate to have a soloist sing the Lord's Prayer. Likewise, if Holy Communion is included in the wedding service, an invitation will be extended for all present to participate. It is inappropriate for the bride and groom, or the wedding party, to receive Holy Communion when others are excluded.

Wedding times

Weddings must begin no later than 5:00 p.m. for members and no later than 4:00 p.m. for nonmembers

Wedding fees

Deposit: A **nonrefundable deposit** of \$50 for active & inactive members and \$250 for nonmembers is required to reserve your wedding date. Without the deposit, the date will be held for one week. If the deposit is not received within that week, the scheduled date and time will be released and made available to others. The deposit is applicable in its entirety to the wedding fees. **ALL FEES MUST BE PAID NO LATER THAN YOUR FINAL COUNSELING SESSION.** Members of this parish have first rights to wedding dates.

Wedding Fee Checklist

Active Members (& immediate family)	\$650
Inactive Members (& immediate family)	\$1500
Nonmembers	\$2500

Additional fees apply for security, receptions, soloists and other extra uses of staff or building. Consult with clergy concerning these charges.

Immediate family refers to children or parents of members.

Active Members are those who are in regular attendance at worship and who make and maintain an annual stated financial commitment (a pledge) to Grace Cathedral.

Inactive Members are those whose membership is at Grace Cathedral but are not in regular attendance and/or do not make an annual pledge.

If, with the approval of the Dean of Grace Cathedral, invitations are extended to persons not affiliated with or hired by the parish to participate in the service, honorariums for these persons are the responsibility of the wedding party.

Receptions in the Great Hall

The fee for active Cathedral members to use the Great Hall for a reception is \$250. All receptions must be catered, and the caterer must furnish all dishes, glasses, punch bowls, utensils, tablecloths, etc. Items belonging to the Cathedral should not be used. The ovens may be used for warming but not for cooking. The dishwasher is not to be used.

Receptions at the Cathedral must end by 7:00 p.m.

If there is to be dancing, a dance floor must be provided at the wedding party's expense.

For insurance and liability reasons, if alcohol is to be served, the wedding party must provide the Cathedral with an insurance rider covering such liability.



For more information or to schedule an appointment with a priest concerning your wedding, please call the Cathedral office at (785) 235-3457.

Grace Cathedral's address
701 SW 8th Avenue, Topeka, Kansas 66603