

For Those Seeking To Be Married By the Priest At This Church

The Episcopal Church teaches that “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.” If you are looking to engage in a pastoral journey that could lead to the sacrament of marriage, please proceed. If you believe you have the answers about when and where you will get married and are looking to hire someone to “do the ceremony,” you probably would be happier looking elsewhere. Because of the vows I have taken and the church’s belief about the sanctity of marriage, before I can commit to marrying a couple, I need to engage in a process of discernment with couple, which includes prayer, discussion, use of an online pre-marriage inventory, and instruction and reflection about the nature, purpose, and meaning, as well as the rights, duties and responsibilities of marriage.

This process of discernment should ordinarily be completed **before** any dates for a ceremony are discussed with the church or publicly announced. Upon completion of the process, if all three parties believe God is calling them to move forward with the marriage, then it becomes appropriate to look at the calendar of the couple, the church, and the priest to look for a suitable date and time for the ceremony and to begin discussions of the specifics of the ceremony.

Before I can celebrate your wedding, the following will eventually need to be true:

1. Both parties must have the right to marry according to the laws of the State and consent to do so freely, without fraud, coercion, mistake as to the identity of either, or mental reservation.
2. Both parties must complete an open-ended discernment process with the priest, and both parties and the priest must conclude the process believing that God is calling the parties to enter into the sacrament of marriage.
3. At least one of the parties must be baptized.
4. Ordinarily, at least one of the parties must be an adult communicant in good standing (meaning you come to church regularly unless prevented by weighty cause, and give of your time, talent, and treasure to support the mission of the church) in the congregation I serve, or I need a good reason for an exception to this requirement.
5. The parties to the marriage must sign the following Declaration of Intent:
We understand the teaching of the church that God's purpose for our marriage is for our mutual joy, for the help and comfort we will give to each other in prosperity and adversity, and, when it is God's will, for the gift and heritage of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of God. We also understand that our marriage is to be unconditional, mutual, exclusive, faithful, and lifelong; and we engage to make the utmost effort to accept these gifts and fulfill these duties, with the help of God and the support of our community.

