

Parish Customary for the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage

Christ Church

Alexandria, Virginia

Congratulations!

We are delighted that you are considering the important sacrament of marriage. We hope that this customary will be helpful in providing basic information for persons wishing to be married at Christ Church.

A note about Christian marriage

Historically, people have come to the Church to be married because they want the Christian faith to be the context in which they become husband and wife and to form a meaningful basis for their life together. The deep and sustaining meaning of Christian marriage can be easily lost when we think of the Church as only a beautiful building for the ceremony. It is essential to understand that Christian marriage implies a spiritual commitment that God, through Jesus Christ, will play a central role in the new relationship. Our clergy are committed to helping couples lay the groundwork for a joyful and long-lasting marriage.

Who may be married at Christ Church?

To be married at Christ Church, one of the parties should be an active member of the parish or intending to become a member. Children of parishioners may also be married at Christ Church. Additionally, at least one of the parties must be a baptized Christian, the ceremony must be attested by at least two witnesses, and the marriage must conform to the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the canons of the Episcopal Church.

How does one become a member of Christ Church?

There are several ways to become a member of this parish. Confirmed Episcopalians may request a Letter of Transfer from the parish they previously attended. Persons coming to the Episcopal Church from other denominations and those who have not previously made a religious commitment should attend Covenant Classes. This series of seven 2-hour classes is scheduled three times yearly and provides a comprehensive introduction to the Episcopal Church, its worship and sacraments, and information specific to the mission and ministries of Christ Church. Following completion of these classes one may be confirmed, received, or reaffirmed by the Bishop. For more information, please contact the membership office at 703-778-4930.

What are the requirements for being married at Christ Church?

The basis for Christian marriage is community and love of Christ. We invite active participation in the worship and ministry of the church. We expect that couples married at Christ Church will attend worship services on a regular basis, make a financial commitment to the church with an annual pledge, and become involved in the life and ministry of the parish through attendance at adult education programs and/or participation in at least one of the many active ministries of the parish. In short, Christ Church is not to be thought of as a wedding chapel. To be married at this church requires your commitment to the life of the parish. The resources of this church in counseling, education, worship, outreach, and service will bless your marriage.

We require at least six months notice for couples wishing to be married, as well as the completion of our six-month marriage preparation program, Water into Wine. This program consists of five classes on Tuesday evenings and one day-long workshop on a Saturday. Classes are about two hours in length and are held approximately once a month.

Additionally, couples will meet individually with their officiating priest several times to supplement the classes and plan the ceremony.

Are there special requirements for remarriage following a divorce?

Yes. If either party is divorced, at least one year must have elapsed between the final divorce decree and the date of remarriage. Approval for remarriage must be obtained from the Bishop of the Diocese of Virginia. The officiating priest will send a petition to the Bishop upon the completion of premarital counseling.

Is there a cost to be married at Christ Church?

There is no charge for the sacrament of marriage. However, if music is desired as part of a wedding ceremony at Christ Church, a fee of \$200 will be charged for the services of our organist, Jason Abel. Any wedding involving more than ten (10) guests also requires the assistance of our wedding docent. There is a \$100 fee for the services of the docent.

Christ Church incurs costs each time a wedding is performed, including custodial and administrative costs, and provision of the Water into Wine premarital program. Couples being married at Christ Church are invited to make a donation to the church to offset these expenses, though the amount given is left to your discretion. Many couples also feel that the joyous occasion of a wedding is an appropriate time to make a donation to those in need in our community by supporting the outreach ministries of the church, and of course we are happy to facilitate these donations as well.

How are wedding arrangements made?

The church or our more intimate chapel may be tentatively reserved for your wedding by contacting the Wedding Coordinator at 703-549-1450. Before a wedding date can be confirmed, paperwork must be completed and returned and we must confirm the availability of the church and officiating clergy. Due to the penitential nature of Advent and Lent, no weddings are performed during these seasons.

Who will officiate at our wedding?

Weddings at Christ Church will be officiated by a member of our clergy staff. Clergy assignment takes into consideration the clergy's availability and the overall church calendar. If you would like another duly ordained clergy person of another parish or tradition to assist, we would be happy to invite them to participate in the service. Please consult your priest during your first meeting for more information.

Are facilities available at the church for a rehearsal dinner or wedding reception?

Yes. The church's Fowler House, Meade Room and Auditorium offer beautiful settings for a rehearsal dinner or wedding reception. For rental fees, occupant capacity, and availability, call 703-778-4930.

Further Questions?

For more information, please contact the Wedding Coordinator at 703-549-1450. Best wishes to you as you look forward to your upcoming marriage!

NOTE: This customary is meant only as a guide. Policies are subject to change.