

St. Christopher's Episcopal Church
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The celebration and blessing of a Christian marriage

This is a time of great rejoicing in the Church. We rejoice with you in anticipation of your marriage and have prepared this guide to assist you in planning for your wedding within the community of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church.

In the Episcopal Church, Holy Matrimony is not just a ceremony of public commitment. It is a sacrament. In the Episcopal tradition marriage is more than two people trying to build a life together; it is an opportunity for God to do something special within their relationship, and within the community.

While it is important to plan for the wedding, it is even more important to plan for the marriage. The color of the dress and the flavor of the cake are inconsequential when compared to the reality of a life-long commitment. The church building may provide the place but the community provides the foundation for the marriage. A church is not just a building but a community of faith. No couple can presume to be married in a vacuum. We believe that the presence and support of a community of faith is essential to the newly married couple, and your marriage is important to us.

Your wedding ceremony is a service of the Episcopal Church and thus is not restricted to only those who have been invited. However, it is not considered proper or courteous to attend a wedding without an invitation.

What is a Sacrament?

The Episcopal Book of Common Prayer (1979) defines a sacrament as "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." Although God works in many ways to bring us to spiritual health and wholeness, the Church has identified seven special ways in which we can be assured of God's presence. One of these is Holy Matrimony. In this sacrament the outward and visible signs are the vows that are made.

What Must I do to be married at St. Christopher's?

The first thing that you must do is ask yourself the question -"why do I want to be married at St. Christopher's Church?" If your answer has something to do with our building, its proximity to the place of the reception, because you like the Episcopal liturgy, or because you like the priest - then it might be best for you to reconsider. St. Christopher's is a community of faith and as such will serve as the backbone of your marriage. We believe that your participation in our faith community now (or another community in the future) is essential to the health of your marriage.

If after your own personal reflection, you (and your spouse to-be) should schedule an appointment with the Rector (Senior Priest) at St. Christopher's. During this meeting you will learn about the process of planning a wedding at St. Christopher's. You should come prepared with at least two prospective dates to place on the church calendar. The priest will tell you about the options available to you for the required premarital counseling which must be completed by all couples who are to be married in the Episcopal Church.

We live in an age when more than fifty percent of marriages end in divorce. Pre-marital preparation does not eliminate problems, but it does serve to look at marriage and your own relationship from a number of directions and sometimes serves to defuse potentially explosive issues that could harm the marriage later. A successful marriage requires more than commitment. It involves patience and skill as well.

If you or your spouse has been divorced in the past, the priest will need to know the date your divorce was finalized and by what court. Our understanding of the sacredness of marriage has made it necessary that one year must elapse between the

divorce date and the wedding date. Third marriages are also possible, but they do require a little more reflection in the pre-marital work.

Setting the Date

According to the canons (laws) of the Church, thirty-day notice must be given before a wedding. This is the minimum time required except in emergencies. Three to six months notice is not beyond reason.

Marriages are not customarily solemnized during the church season of Lent (the six weeks prior to Easter). There are rare exceptions to this rule, military deployment and illness being the most accepted.

The Service

The Episcopal Church, the Diocese of Eastern Michigan and St. Christopher's have all accepted an understanding of marriage which is inclusive of the love between a couple of the same gender. The priest will share copies of the liturgies available when you meet. It is appropriate but not mandatory for the Solemnization of Holy Matrimony to be celebrated with Holy Eucharist, commonly referred to as Holy Communion or the Mass. When Holy Communion is part of the service, all baptized Christians who are present are invited to receive Communion with the newly married couple.

Recently, many couples have opted to celebrate a pre-nuptial Eucharist early on the day of the wedding or as part of the rehearsal the night before.

Clergy of other denominations may assist in the service at the invitation of the Celebrant. Participating clergy of any denomination must be pre-approved by the officiating priest and the rector of St. Christopher's Church, and in some cases, the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan.

The Prayer Book encourages couples to select someone special to read the Old Testament lesson and the Epistle. An ordained person must read the gospel. Non-scriptural readings must be approved in advance by the officiating clergy. A non-

eucharistic wedding may include only one reading of scripture. A Eucharistic wedding must include at least two readings from scripture with one being from the Gospels.

Music

Music plays an important part in setting a sacred and uplifting tone for your wedding. At St. Christopher's we want to help you choose music that is both beautiful and special to you personally.

If you choose to have music at your wedding, it is the prerogative of our musicians to play at your service. In the event that he/she cannot play, a substitute may be used subject to your approval. You must contact the Director of Music as soon as the date is set. The fee for the organist at St. Christopher's is \$150.00. This includes meeting with the couple, attending the rehearsal and playing for the wedding. Payment is expected at the rehearsal. A \$25.00 fee is charged per additional rehearsal. If you select another organist when our Director of Music is available, a fee of \$50.00 will be charged.

Music selected for a wedding should be suitable for a church service, as distinguished from secular music used at a social gathering. As in all services of the Church, it should be an aid to worship. Secular music often does not fit the serious nature of the ceremony and is far better used at the reception. Pre-recorded music is discouraged.

Your officiating priest and the rector of St. Christopher's have the final approval of all music used in all services at St. Christopher's. Forms of music that may be used include: hymns sung by the congregation; organ or other instrumental music; an anthem sung by a soloist, small group or choir. Music is most appropriate for the processional, while preparing the table for communion (if applicable), and at the recessional. The Book of Common Prayer suggests several other places where music is appropriate as well.

Decorations

All decorations are to be arranged through the Sacristans (Altar Guild members), usually two, who are assigned to assist at your wedding. Sacristans represent the priest in directing and assisting with all the decorations such as flowers, candles, greenery, etc. The Sacristans know the traditions and guidelines in the use of the church building and its appurtenances. Please allow one month's notice when working with them.

Some decoration considerations are:

1. Flowers are to be provided by those planning the wedding. Altar flowers may be left at the church as the couple's gift for use the following Sunday.
2. Those planning the wedding are to arrange with the sacristan assigned for the time of flower delivery and for a time to get into the church building for decorating.
3. The use of rice and birdseed is not permitted.
4. Silk petals, but not natural flower petals, may be strewn down the aisle.
5. The cost of extra candles or decorations is to be assumed by those planning the wedding.

A donation to the Altar Guild for their help in your wedding will be faithfully accepted.

WEDDING FEES

Fee Schedule

Building Use / Administrative Fees	No charge
Prepare and Enrich Assessment	\$35.00
Organist	\$150.00
Bench Fee (with permission, an outside organist)	\$ 50.00
Sexton Fee (depending on size of wedding)	\$ 75.00

There is no charge for the priest or other clergy; although it is customary to make an honorarium (gift) to them individually.

A gift to the church is also appropriate and will be received for our building fund.