Guidelines for

Celebrating A Christian Marriage

A black and white circular logo

Description automatically generated

Christ Episcopal Church in Covington

120 S. New Hampshire Street

Covington, LA 70433

(985) 892-3177

www.christchurchcovington.com

INTRODUCTION

Your wedding is an important event. When you ask for the blessing of the Church, your wedding becomes an important event in the faith community at Christ Episcopal Church as well.

There are various members of the congregation and staff who will be involved in the wedding celebration. We are here to assist you in your preparations and hope that you will feel free to call on us. In return, we expect our volunteers and staff to be treated with respect and courtesy, keeping in mind that we are not infinitely flexible and have rules for a reason. It is our intention that this booklet will help answer most of your questions. *Please read this document carefully and present any further questions to the priest at your first meeting.*

Some of the people you will be in contact with are:

Rector The Rev. D. Seth Donald

Associate Rector The Rev. Guimond Pierre Louis

Parish Administrator Mary Anne Reidy

Music Director Carolyn Parmenter

Weddding Coordinators Dianne Allen-Pierce and Susan Atkins,

**Under no circumstances should a couple announce a date or print invitations or otherwise encumber themselves with any other wedding plans until approval is given by the Rector of Christ Church for a date and time for the wedding.**

The policies, rules and advice in this manual have three purposes:

First, to uphold the sacramental character of marriage and the reality that every wedding is a worship service of the Church.

Second, to enable an attitude of reverence and care from all participants at each marriage celebrated at Christ Church.

Third, to ensure that your marriage ceremony is done with dignity, beauty, order, and joy.

**TIMELINE FOR PREPARATIONS**

Complete Holy Matrimony General Information form and

return it to Church office \_\_\_\_\_

Obtain approval of officiating priest prior to any other plans \_\_\_\_\_

Appointment with one of the parish’s wedding coordinators

Turn in the Wedding Checklist \_\_\_\_\_

Schedule appointment with priest \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting with a professional counselor, if required \_\_\_\_\_

Initial appointment with priest. \_\_\_\_\_

Appointment with the parish music director \_\_\_\_\_

Subsequent appointments with priest. \_\_\_\_\_

Obtain marriage license from clerk of court \_\_\_\_\_

One month prior to wedding, photographer returns signed form to church \_\_\_\_\_

Two weeks prior to wedding, payment of fees \_\_\_\_\_

Two weeks prior to wedding, order church bulletins, if not suppling your own \_\_\_\_\_

Prior to rehearsal, payment of organist’s fee \_\_\_\_\_

One day prior to rehearsal, turn in license documents to church office \_\_\_\_\_

Wedding Day: signing of marriage license. \_\_\_\_\_

Wedding: Groom, groomsmen and ushers arrive at church **one hour** prior to ceremony. Bridal party, including mothers, grandmothers, etc. arrive **30 minutes** prior to ceremony.

Following the ceremony: **30 minutes** allowed for photographs in the church.

CELEBRATING A CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AT CHRIST CHURCH

**What is Christian marriage?**

Christian marriage introduces God into the relationship. The relationship God established between Christ and the Church is the model for Christian marriage. The couple promises to live together until parted by death; to love, honor, and cherish each other; to establish a relationship of mutual fellowship, encouragement, and understanding, realizing that these things are only possible with God’s help.

Christian marriage is blessed by the worshipping community of faith. When two people come to the Church asking if they may marry in the Church, they are acknowledging their need for a community, and their responsibility to the community. The Canons of the Episcopal Church and of the Diocese of Louisiana, The Book of Common Prayer, Christian tradition, and parish custom inform us of several things which need to be considered in this booklet.

**Who may marry in the Church?**

The immediate family of active, participating members of Christ Church are welcome to plan for marriage at Christ Church.

For those who are not currently active, participating members of Christ Church, we ask that you come and participate in our parish life by worshipping regularly on Sunday mornings for six months and make/maintain a financial pledge to the parish over that same period of time ***prior*** *to scheduling a wedding.* While there may be exceptions, the standard policy is that only active members of our church community may be married in our church.

At least one member of the couple must be a baptized member of Christ Church, either through letter of transfer from another Episcopal congregation or with some other proof of baptism from another church who baptize in the name of the Trinity.

Episcopalians in the Diocese of Louisiana who are not members of Christ Church should have their rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge write a letter to the Rector requesting that the marriage be solemnized here, explaining why it cannot take place in the home parish.

On occasion, it is possible to schedule weddings for persons outside of the Diocese of Louisiana who are active in their home parishes. To request this, the potential candidates should ask their rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge to write a letter to the Rector requesting that the marriage be solemnized here and explain why the request is being made. The request must be made at least six months in advance of the proposed wedding date. Such requests will be considered after requests from members of Christ Church. Once this letter has been received, a priest will contact the couple to schedule an initial appointment to discuss parish wedding policies.

**The Declaration of Intention**

The Canon Law of the Episcopal Church requires all who wish to marry in the Episcopal Church to sign the Declaration of Intention. By signing this document, the Church understands the couple to be saying that they believe Christian marriage to be a life-long union and that they intend to model their lives and that of their household on the teaching of Christ. The Declaration of Intention will be signed as part of the marriage preparation in the presence of the priest.

PREMARITAL INSTRUCTION

**A Canonical requirement**

Premarital instruction with a priest is required by the Canon Law of the Episcopal Church. The initial session must be with a priest serving at Christ Church and provides an opportunity to discuss the material in this booklet and to set a schedule for the additional sessions. After the initial meeting, if geographic considerations preclude meetings with Christ Church's clergy, pre-marital counseling may be arranged with another Episcopal priest located closer to the couple. In some instances, the responsible priest may require the couple to do professional counseling at their expense.

MARRIAGE OF DIVORCED PERSONS

**Permission of the Bishop is required.**

In addition to all the standards for a first marriage, the permission of the Bishop of Louisiana must be obtained if one or both persons to marry have been previously married and divorced more than once. The couple must undergo counseling from a licensed professional in order to understand the reasons for the failure of the previous marriages. The counselor will write a letter to be included with the marriage petition to the bishop.

The officiating priest must be furnished with a copy of any certified divorce decrees. The divorce decree must be final for one year prior to a planned wedding date. The Canons of the Church require that the divorced person demonstrate continuing concern for the wellbeing of the former spouse, and of any children of the prior marriage. Meeting these criteria is managed by the responsible priest together with the couple intending marriage. If the priest is not satisfied that these obligations are being met, he/she is obliged to decline performing the wedding.

**Time required**

The Bishop’s approval takes time to obtain. Therefore, application with Christ Church should be made six (6) months prior to the desired date of marriage if a former marriage has ended in divorce. If application is for a third marriage for either party, more than six (6) months is required and professional counseling is always necessary.

PLANNING THE WEDDING

**Selecting the date and time**

**Under no circumstances should a couple announce a date or print invitations or encumber themselves with any other wedding plans until the officiating priest approves and puts the date on the church calendar.**

The first step: Contact the Church office. Complete and return the marriage form.

The second step: Receive approval and date from officiating priest.

The third step: Contact and meet with one of Christ Church’s wedding coordinators and the director of music.

The fourth step: Meet with a Priest for a preparation schedule.

A wedding involves the participation of a great many people, and adequate notice is essential. However, it is advisable to plan arrangements as far in advance as possible to guarantee that no scheduling difficulties will arise. Advance notice of four months is the rule, rather than the exception, and in no case, less than three months.

At Christ Church weddings are not scheduled during the church seasons of Advent and Lent, including Holy Week and the week after Easter. The solemn character of these seasons is compromised by the joyous nature of weddings and the traditional social celebrations which surround them. Nor are weddings solemnized on Sundays (except as a part of regular Sunday worship), on Thanksgiving Day and the following weekend: Christmas Eve through the weekend after Christmas, as well as major secular holiday weekends.

*Weddings on Saturdays will take place no later than 6:00 p.m.*

*Rehearsals on Fridays will be scheduled at 6:00 p.m. or earlier.*

**The Wedding Service**

The Book of Common Prayer is the liturgical form authorized by the Episcopal Church for all celebrations of marriage. At Christ Church no other rites are permitted. No other vows or blessings may be added or substituted. Readings are from the Bible. The clergy recommends that the celebration of Holy Eucharist be included as part of the marriage service. When the Eucharist is to be part of the wedding celebration, it is offered to all baptized Christians in attendance. Appropriate readings for the wedding liturgy may be found on page 426 of The Book of Common Prayer. The marriage license is signed immediately after the ceremony. **A “Unity Candle” is not used at Christ Church.**

**Participating clergy from outside Christ Church**

The Rector is glad to discuss the participation of other clergy in the wedding. Visiting Episcopal clergy, or other clergy may, at the Rector’s discretion, participate in the service. When clergy outside the staff of Christ Church are involved, it is proper for the Rector to extend a formal written invitation to that person. When clergy outside of the diocese or denomination is requested, permission must be granted by the bishop. The couple should *discuss* this request with the priest *at their first pre-marital meeting*. The couple will be asked to furnish contact information for possible guest clergy.

**Marriage License**

All civil requirements of the State of Louisiana must be fulfilled before the wedding, and a valid, current marriage license must be presented to the officiating priest before the rehearsal. The marriage license may be procured from the Clerk of Court’s office in any parish in Louisiana and is valid for a period of thirty (30) days.

https://www.sttammanyclerk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Marriage-License-Department-Fees-2020-1-13.pdf

Ordinarily, a couple may not be married within seventy-two (72) hours of the issuance of the license and not beyond the thirty (30) day period of its validation. Should an exception to this be required, the Clerk of Court will advise the proper legal procedures.

Once the license is secured, it should be taken to the church office a few days prior to the rehearsal. The marriage license will be signed immediately after the ceremony. The couple or their representatives will return the completed paperwork to the courthouse.

**Christ Church Parish Register**

Please have two adult witnesses designated to sign the Canonical Parish Register immediately following the service. This register remains secure at Christ Church.

**Fees**

There is no charge to a contributing member of Christ Church for the use of the church or chapel for a wedding. It is appropriate for the family to make a gift in the form of a thank-offering to the parish in proportion to the cost of the reception. Ten percent (10%) of the cost of the wedding is a suggested amount, or a minimum of $2,000. It is also customary that a personal honorarium be given to the Officiant and/or a check made payable directly to the priest's discretionary fund as a matter of personal expression of appreciation for his/her services. A range of $300-500 is common for this honorarium.

**However, other charges apply:**

$250 for the organist

Fees for other musicians to be determined individually and paid directly to the musician

$25 0 for the sexton to attend to the building and grounds

**All fees must be paid in the church office two weeks before the wedding.**

**Seating capacity of Church and Chapel**

The seating capacity of the Church, including the balcony, has been determined to be 300 people.

The seating capacity of the Chapel has been determined to be 80 people.

People may not stand, nor may chairs be placed in the aisles. The aisles are narrow such that a hazard would be created should an emergency arise. The City of Covington Fire Marshall enforces this code requirement.

**Rector and Parish Administrator**

As in every service of the Church, the Rector is charged by Canon Law with the final responsibility for determining the appropriateness of all arrangements and details and for conducting the rehearsal. At Christ Church the Rector and staff clergy are assisted by the church’s wedding coordinators, who see to the mechanical arrangements and advises the bride-to-be on all matters pertaining to wedding customs and rules at Christ Church. The church’s wedding coordinators are well informed about weddings and know the rules and the worship space of Christ Church. Contact the coordinators about details and arrangements other than scheduling the date. The bride should contact the church’s Parish Administrator and coordinators well in advance of the wedding, after the date has been secured with the priest. Outside wedding consultants and planners are allowed, knowing that the rector and his/her clergy are the relevant authorities in the liturgy of holy matrimony, and on any activities on church property.

**Bridal Party**

The suggested *maximum* number of attendants is *six* bridesmaids and *six* groomsmen. This issue should be taken up with the clergy at the first meeting.

Flower girls and ring bearers are permitted, but they must be at least six years of age.

**Flowers**

One of the parish’s wedding coordinators will be happy to advise the bride-to-be about appropriate floral and church decorations. The bride, of course, may choose any florist she wishes, but it is expected that floral arrangements will be simple and not overpower the beauty of the sanctuary or detract from the altar as its focal point.

The following information needs to be discussed with the florist:

1. The bride must plan arrangements ahead of time for the florist to have access to the church on the day of the wedding. This can be done through the Parish Administrator on the day BEFORE the rehearsal between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.
2. All deliveries and decorating arrangements must be completed three hours before the ceremony.
3. No bows or ribbons of any kind may be used in the Chancel (inside altar rail). This includes bows and ribbons on candelabra. Floral arrangements must be of real, fresh, or dried flowers and natural greenery.
4. Flowers and greenery in the church must be natural; no artificial floral arrangements are allowed. Ribbons and bows are allowed in the nave. Candles must be in votives or in hurricane globes.
5. The brass vases and liners belonging to the church are available for use.
6. For Saturday weddings, the floral arrangements behind the altar are typically used the following day for Sunday services and are donated to the glory of God in honor of the newlyweds. All other decorations must be removed after the ceremony. If a wedding takes place on a day other than Saturday, please remove all arrangements, including the altar flowers immediately after the service.

**Aisle Runner & scattering**

An aisle runner is NOT used for wedding ceremonies at Christ Church.

The throwing of rice, birdseed, flower petals, or confetti is NOT allowed within the Church, Chapel or on the steps and sidewalk leading to them.

**Candles and Hurricane Shades**

Real, non-mechanical candles are the only candles used in the sanctuary. These candles are part of the altar setting and will be provided by the Altar Guild.

The Church has hurricane shades and candle holders which may be used on the 18 window ledges of the church or the six windows of the chapel. The 6-8-inch candles used in the hurricane globes are to be purchased by the bride’s family. It is also their responsibility to wash the globes if necessary, before and after use and return the globes to the appropriate closet of the church or chapel. The globes should be put in place by someone designated by the bride but will be removed from the window ledges after the wedding service by the sexton. Any decorations left on them will be discarded.

**Bulletins**

Bulletins, similar to Sunday service bulletins, may be used for wedding liturgies and nuptial Eucharist services published by the church office. If the couple wishes to print their own bulletin, they may do so, if the wording of the bulletin conforms to the liturgy of The Book of Common Prayer, 1979. The content of such bulletins must be approved by the officiating priest at least two weeks prior to the wedding.

**Music at the Wedding**

Music in the Church is first planned in coordination with the church music director. All wedding music used at Christ Church must have the Rector’s approval.

The Church and Chapel are always available for weddings without music, but when music is desired the Christ Church Organist, who is most familiar with our instrument, must be employed. This fee is $200 payable directly to the organist **prior** to the rehearsal.

**Wedding Processionals and Recessionals**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| M | Bm | B | R |  |  |
| X | X | X |  | Air II - Water Music | Handel |
| X | X | X |  | Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring | Bach |
| X | X | X |  | Canon in D | Pachelbel |
|  |  | X |  | Processional Hymn with Fanfare | Purcell |
| X | X | X |  | St. Anthony Chorale | Brahms |
| X | X | X |  | Air I | Handel |
|  |  |  | X | Allegro Maestoso | Handel |
| X | X | X |  | Allegro Moderato | Handel |
| X | X | X | X | Trumpet Tune | Purcell |
| X | X | X | X | Trumpet Voluntary | Clarke |
|  |  |  | X | Now Thank We All Our God | Bach |
| X | X | X | X | Rondeau | Mouret |
| X | X | X | X | Trumpet Voluntary | Stanley |
|  |  |  |  | The Rejoicing | Handel |
|  |  | X | X | Arioso | Handel |
|  |  |  | X | Psalm 19 | Marcello |
| X | X | X |  | My Heart Ever Faithful | Bach |
| X | X | X | X | Rejoice Ye Pure in Heart | Lows |
| X | X |  |  | Air | Wesley |
| X | X | X | X | Royal Fireworks Music - various movement | Handel |
|  |  |  | X | Recessional on Hymn to Joy | Beethoven |
|  |  | X | X | Rigadon | Campra |
|  |  |  | X | Sinfonia - Cantata 29 | Bach |

Key

M - Mothers’ and Grandmothers’ entrance

Bm - Bridesmaids

B - Bride

R - Recessional

THE WEDDING REHEARSAL

**Responsibility of the Couple**

If guests are expected at the wedding, a rehearsal must precede the wedding. The rehearsal will take place the day before the ceremony, usually no later than 6:00 p.m. Other times are arranged with the officiating priest. It is the responsibility of the couple to have all their attendants at the Church on time and sober. Alcohol is not allowed on premises before, during or after rehearsals and weddings (including in vehicles). If there is a rehearsal dinner, it should in no way conflict with the rehearsal, which lasts about one hour.

One of the church’s wedding coordinators will be present at the rehearsal. It is not expected that the Organist or the wedding coordinator will attend the rehearsal dinner. Clergy are often open to rehearsal dinner invitations and will offer a blessing at the rehearsal dinner, depending on the demands of their schedule.

The couple will assist the ushers if they inform specific family or friends ahead of time if they are to be seated in family pew sections of the Church. As they enter the Church, these honored guests should inform the ushers.

THE DAY OF THE WEDDING

**Facilities at the Church**

We do not have a “Bride’s Room” or any extensive space where people can change clothes at Christ Church. There is a small powder room in the Parish House where the bride can do last-minute finishing touches, but the bride and groom should not expect elaborate changing facilities at the Church. A wedding coordinator will be on hand to assist in any way. If arrangements are made with the Parish Administrator, the Parlor of the Parish House and church grounds may be used before the wedding for pictures.

**Photographs**

Because of the dignity of a wedding as a sacramental service of worship, **photographers may not distract from the service in any way**. The couple may choose any photographer they wish, but the photographer, in turn, must have the permission and approval of the Rector or church’s Parish Administrator **one month prior to the wedding**. Please see the Photographer’s Instructions on the last page of this booklet for specific rules. Give the appropriate form to the photographer for signature and return the signed form to the office with the wedding checklist. Please inform your guests that photo taking from the congregation during the service with cameras or phones is not allowed.

**The Ceremony**

All ushers should be at the church and ready to begin seating guests not less than one hour before the wedding begins. The groom and best man should arrive at the church not less than one hour before the ceremony. The bride and her entourage, including mothers or family representatives, should be present not less than 30 minutes before the ceremony.

A few moments before the ceremony, grandmothers of the bride and groom will be seated. The mother of the groom and then the mother of the bride will be seated a minute or so before the service begins. The wedding coordinator will give the appropriate signals to the organist and will help the bridal party to be spaced properly as they begin to go up the aisle.

The bride’s mother and the rest of the congregation should stand as the bride enters the church. At the conclusion of the service, the bride’s parents will immediately be escorted out of the church, followed by the groom’s parents. The congregation is then free to depart. At the conclusion of the service, the bride, groom and two witnesses should go immediately to the sacristy to meet the officiant where they will sign the wedding license. Pictures can be taken after the license is signed and not before.

**All vans, limousines or other large vehicles should drop off attendants and leave the area. They should park elsewhere.** These vehicles can return to a pick-up area at the church after the wedding and post-wedding photographs are completed. Parking is limited in the vicinity of the church and should be available for your guests attending the marriage service.

THE RECEPTION

**Use of the Parish House**

When available, the facilities of the Parish House (Holzhalb Hall) may be rented for wedding receptions. These facilities must be reserved well in advance and priority will be given to parish organizations that use them on a regular, continuing schedule. Rental fees for the Parish House, the Commons, the Kitchen, and the Parlor, may be obtained from the Parish Administrator. A deposit is required to reserve the rooms.

There are rules pertaining to the use of alcohol in the Parish House, which have been set by the Vestry of Christ Church. We ask that you respect these rules and that you practice constraint in the serving of alcoholic beverages.



**PHOTOGRAPHER’S GUIDELINES**

Because a wedding is a sacramental service of worship, the Rector requires that photographers be neither intrusive nor distracting. You must observe the following rules:

* The photographer must be approved by the parish wedding coordinator or the Rector at least 30 days prior to the wedding date.
* If desired, pictures may be taken one hour before the ceremony in the parlor of the Parish House. Arrangements with the church’s Parish Administrator must be made in advance.
* Recording the ceremony will be taken discreetly from the balcony. No artificial lighting may be used.
* Natural light pictures may be taken from the balcony, with cameras on silent mode, during the ceremony.
* Flash pictures may be taken from the fourth pew from the back of the Church only (and two pews from the back of the Chapel) as participants enter from the narthex. At no other time in the service will flash bulbs be permitted. Cameras should be on silent mode so that no shutter noise is made.
* Thirty minutes are allowed for pictures to be taken of the wedding party and altar after the ceremony when the congregation has left the church. **Photographers are not allowed to move around the Sanctuary or Nave during the ceremony.**
* The marriage license is signed immediately following the conclusion of the ceremony before any pictures are taken.
* Have the photographer taking photographs sign this sheet and return it to the church office **one month prior** to the wedding verifying that the guidelines have been read and understood. The photographer should keep a copy for reference.

Photographer’s name in print \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Photographer’s signature

120 S. New Hampshire Street

Covington, LA 70433

(985) 892-3177

www.christchurchcovington.com