

Definition and Nature

All Christians are called to bear witness to the good news of God's love and grace in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are empowered for such witness by our covenantal relationship with God.

Our covenantal life with God is expressed in relationships of commitment and faithfulness. It is the Church's joy to celebrate these relationships as signs of God's love, to pray for God's grace to support couples in their life together, and to join with these couples in our shared witness to the gospel in the world.

Holy Matrimony is Christian Marriage, in which two people enter into a lifelong union, make their vows before God and the Church, and receive the grace and blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows.

A couple's marital relationship is a permanent, primary, covenantal commitment, taking precedence over their other relationships, including that of parent to children. It is, however, a relationship lived in the context of wider social relationship, including relatives, friends and the Church. Christian marriage is intended to be symbolic of Christ's love to the world. The model for Christian marriage is the love of God manifested through Jesus Christ, whose life and death were the perfect example of self-giving. In like manner, the couple's relationship is to be based on mutual self-giving. This orientation and behavior are not based upon their vows, their compatibility, nor even love, but based upon their relationship with Jesus Christ. As the couple perseveres in this example, they are indeed a symbol of Christ's love to relatives, friends and the church. In that regard, if the couple chooses to write their own vows, the liturgy of the marriage in the Book of Common Prayer will still apply.

Preparations and Requirements

General Information

It is assumed that people who are interested in marrying before a priest, through a sacrament of the Church, are doing so out of Christian conviction. Since Christian marriage is entered into within the local parish community, the prime visible expression of such conviction is regular and frequent worship attendance within the parish. The priest is happy to officiate at a wedding when this is the case, and reluctant to do so, if it is not.

First Steps to Arranging Your Wedding

Prior to making any other arrangements, the couple must speak with the Rector. This is necessary to ascertain the couple's circumstances, determine the availability of the Rector and Church, and give ample time to fulfill necessary requirements. Such notification must be made a minimum of four months prior to the desired date.

Episcopal Church Requirements

It is required that at least one of the parties be a baptized Christian; that the ceremony be attested to by at least two witnesses; and that the marriage conforms to the laws of the State and the Canons of the Church.

Worship Requirements

It is recommended that at least one of the parties in the couple must be a regular and frequent participant in the worship life of Saint David's or their home parish for at least four months prior to the wedding ceremony.

Premarital Counseling

Church canons require premarital counseling. The Rector normally meets with the couple four times, approximately 1 hour each session, for instruction and counseling. Topics include Christian life, Christian marriage, exploration of the couple's relationship, and liturgical planning. Counseling sessions are scheduled by mutual appointment. In case of a prior marriage and divorce, the Bishop's permission is required for remarriage (this process adds another four week waiting period). A copy of the final court decree must be presented to the Rector, at their first meeting.

Out of Town Residency

In the case of parties living out of town but desiring solemnization of marriage at Saint David's Church, the prior requirements must be met through the local parish and verified by the local Rector with a letter sent to St. David's Rector prior to the wedding. Guest clergy may participate, if prior arrangements are made in consultation with the Rector.

Priests Discretion to Decline

Canonically, it is within the discretion of a priest to decline to solemnize any marriage. We will decline to solemnize if a couple is unable or unwilling to meet the above requirements. We may decline if, in the course of counseling, the Rector comes to have strong reservations about the couple's relationship.

Rehearsals

Rehearsals are directed by the Rector and normally scheduled for the day before the wedding. The wedding ceremony is rehearsed; family or friends who have special roles (readers, chalice bearers, intercessors) rehearse their roles. The wedding couple and witnesses sign the parish register and the marriage license. People who need to be present for the rehearsal are the wedding couple, the attendants and the presenters. **Couples must bring their marriage license, the organist's fee and any other fees required, to the Rehearsal.**

The Ceremony

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage is a sacrament of the Church; thus all plans concerning the ceremony (music, flowers, etc.) are under the final direction of the Rector. The Order of service used will be from the Book of Common Prayer (p. 423). In the case of same sex marriages, the Order of service will be (*The Witnessing of Vows and Blessings of Same Sex Covenant*) as authorized by the Episcopal church.

The service is properly held in the church and may include the Holy Eucharist. It is appropriate for members of the family or friends to read certain lessons or prayers, with adequate preparation. At the Offertory of the Eucharist, the newly-married couple normally presents the bread and wine. This represents the special offering of their new marriage to God, as well as the life and labor of all present. By popular custom, weddings are frequently scheduled on Saturday, but can be held at other reasonable times. Weddings will not be scheduled during Advent or Lent.

Fees

A suggested donation of \$300 is given to the Rector for the Discretionary Fund of Saint David's. For non-members of St. David's, a \$500 Thank Offering is given to St. David's and a \$350 gift to the Rector. A custodial fee of \$125 covers the cleaning and rearranging of the church space before and after the service. An additional fee may apply if extra rehearsals, as with other musicians, are requested, or if the ceremony begins more than a half-hour late.

Music

Music must be appropriate for a service of the Church. The Pastoral Musician will go over the guidelines with the couple and provide a written copy. The couple should contact the Pastoral Musician for an appointment as soon as the date with the Rector has been confirmed. The Pastoral Musician can be reached by leaving a message with the church office at 985-3073. It is assumed that the Pastoral Musician will play the wedding service. If other arrangements are desired for special reasons, they must be in consultation with our Pastoral Musician and have the approval of the Rector. All arrangements with respect to the choice of music, soloists, instrumentalists, or choirs must be in consultation with, and agreement of, the Pastoral Musician.

Photography and Videography

Photography is allowed during the processional and the recessional only. Before or after the service, there can be as many pictures taken as desired. Photographs may be taken by a designated photographer only. Please advise family and friends that they may not take photographs during

the ceremony. After the service, there are no restrictions. Please advise the photographer that he/she must contact the Rector to review photographic details and will be expected to visit the church building for personal familiarity; the direct contact and visit must be prior to the wedding day. Photographic plans will not be considered confirmed until the prior two conditions are met.

Videotaping is permitted, but the camera is restricted to an area which does not intrude upon the wedding ceremony. No spotlights of any kind may be used. Following the service, anyone may take photographs from anywhere in the church. Portions of the ceremony can be re-staged, if desired.

Flowers

All matters concerning flowers must be in consultation with, and approval of, the Altar Guild Directress. The Altar Guild Directress acts as Saint David's coordinator for flowers and other non-liturgical concerns regarding the wedding. The size and placement of floral arrangements will follow normal St. David's guidelines and shall be under the Directress's supervision. The couple is responsible for seeing that the florist contacts the Directress directly to review the size and placement of the arrangements. The florist will be expected to visit the church building prior to the wedding in order to be personally familiar with the style and décor of the building. Floral plans will not be considered confirmed until the prior two conditions are met. Altar flowers for a wedding are considered given to the Church and should not be removed without the Rector's approval. The Sunday service bulletin will note the gift of flowers and name the giver, if so desired. Arrangements must be made to remove all decorations, pew flowers and ribbons immediately after the ceremony. The altar flowers are to be left for the Sunday service. For reasons of safety, no aisle runners may be used. Also, for reasons of safety, the throwing of rice, birdseed or any other objects is not permitted.