

**WEDDING PLANNING GUIDE**  
EMMANUEL EPISCOPAL CHURCH, CHESTERTOWN, MD

Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between two persons in the presence of God. As such, marriage is a sacrament of the church. A marriage ceremony must be attested to by two witnesses, and must conform to the laws of Maryland and the Canons of the Episcopal Church.

**PREPARATION**

1) When a couple decides to be married, they should contact the Rector to discuss their plans before any other arrangements are made. At least thirty days advance notice is required, but a period of ninety days (three months) is recommended. No final decision about solemnization of the marriage in the church can be made until the couple and the rector have met at least once.

2) If one or both of the parties had a previous marriage dissolved by annulment or divorce, it is necessary to obtain the permission of the Bishop, in consultation with the Rector, using the forms provided. Forms must be submitted to the Bishop at least thirty (30) days in advance of the scheduled date for the wedding ceremony.

3) At least one of the parties must be baptized. Since the Church views marriage as a sacramental relationship which is nourished by the community of faith, it is expected that the couple worship regularly with this or some other church community.

4) Both parties must sign the Declaration of Intention as required by the Canons of the Episcopal Church.

5) A valid marriage license must be obtained from the Clerk of the Circuit Court, Kent County, 103 N. Cross Street, Chestertown (410-778-7460), or from the Clerk of the Court in the county and state in which the marriage will take place. See <http://www.courts.state.md.us/clerks/kent/marriage.html>.

*The license should be given to the Rector at the wedding rehearsal.*

6) Normally, a minimum of three sessions of preparatory conversation with the Rector are required. Under some circumstances, pre-marital counseling may be done with another clergy person.

## **THE WEDDING CEREMONY**

- 1) The marriage service, found on page 423 of the Book of Common Prayer is normally used. Certain adaptations are possible and can be discussed with the Rector.
- 2) There must be at least two witnesses to the marriage.
- 3) The marriage license and parish register are witnessed, and the license is signed and mailed by the officiating priest following the ceremony.
- 4) Avis Wheatley, organist, or Stephanie LaMotte, Director of Music, a person approved by them, will normally play at all weddings at Emmanuel Church. The couple should meet with him to choose music. Remember that a wedding is a religious service, so popular music is not appropriate. Ms. Wheatley or Mrs. LaMotte can advise. Soloists and instrumentalists may be used under the direction of the Parish Music Minister and the Rector.
- 5) Rehearsals (the afternoon/evening before the ceremony) are usually necessary in order to make the ceremony go smoothly. All people involved in the wedding ceremony should attend.
- 6) The Parish Hall is available for use, but must be left clean and in order. All personal items should be removed after the ceremony. There are bathrooms in the Parish Hall for the use of the wedding party and guests. No smoking is permitted in any part of the building.
- 7) Photos. Since the wedding is a worship service, no flash photos or special lighting is allowed except during the entry and exit of the wedding party. Non-flash photography is allowed during the service from the back of the church. Posed photos may be taken after the ceremony, but a time limit should be adhered to.
- 8). Flowers placed in the church are symbolic of the joy of the occasion and represent a thank offering to God. The arrangement of flowers is under the supervision of the Emmanuel Flower Guild, who will be glad to advise about the quantity and kind of flowers which might be appropriate. Two vases of flowers, one on either side of the altar are customary.
- 9) Restrictions:
  - a) Marriages are not normally celebrated in the Lenten season.

b) Use of confetti and rice is forbidden.  
c) The Church, the Parish Hall, and the grounds surrounding the Church, must be left clean and in good order. All personal items must be taken, and items not wanted must be disposed of.

8) Participation of other clergy who are friends of the bride and groom is possible and should be discussed with the Rector well in advance of the ceremony.

## **DONATIONS & FEES**

**Active members of Emmanuel:** There is no charge for the use of the church and the services of the clergy for active or pledging parishioners of Emmanuel Episcopal Church and their immediate families. However, thank offerings to the church and a donation to the Rector's Discretionary Fund are appropriate, if so desired.

**For all others:** The congregation expects that those who are not church members will contribute an appropriate amount for the use of the church for a wedding. An appropriate donation for the use of the church for the wedding ceremony and rehearsal is usually \$750.00. The rector will spend at least 8-10 hours in preparation for the wedding, taking time away from his/her other duties, so it is expected that the Rector should receive a gift of \$300.00 - \$500.00.

**The fee for the organist:** \$300.00 (includes one rehearsal)

**Flowers:** usually \$75 - \$100 per arrangement, dependent on type of flowers (two arrangements are customary).

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***The union of two persons in heart, body and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Therefore, 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 (excerpt from "The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage" from The Book of Common Prayer, p 423).***