

**The Church of the Ascension
Norfolk, Virginia
Information for those Contemplating Holy Matrimony (2015)**

Congratulations! We are pleased that you seek to enter into a Christian Marriage at the Church of the Ascension. The congregation and Rector want to do everything possible to support you in this effort. We hope that these guidelines will answer some of your questions and give you a sense of the way in which we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony in this place. We also hope these guidelines do not appear overly rigid to you. They are simply meant to insure a tasteful and meaningful experience for all persons within the traditions of the Episcopal Church. Please read through this document and accept it by signing the Covenant at the end (Appendix VI). You may call the parish office for any additional clarification or assistance (757) 423-6715 or email us at nbeamon@ascension-norfolk.org

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage is a solemn and public covenant made in the presence of God and the worshipping community. In this context, Marriage is a Sacrament of Christ which witnesses to the unity between the Church and our Savior. The Book of Common Prayer (1979) is our guide for this service. It sets the profession of vows in the context of the Holy Eucharist, although this can be adapted for due cause. Every wedding in the Episcopal Church must conform to the laws of the state and the canons of our Church. At least two witnesses must attest to any wedding.

Scheduling

Except in extraordinary circumstances, the couple must contact the Church at least 60 days prior to the wedding. They should sign a Declaration of Intention (Appendix I). We expect some experience with the worshipping community at Ascension or another Episcopal Church. Couples are normally expected to have three counseling sessions with the Rector before the wedding. In these sessions the couple will discuss the nature of Christian Marriage and other important topics with the clergy.

NOTE: WHILE RESERVING A WEDDING DATE ON THE PARISH CALENDAR IS POSSIBLE, THE RECTOR WILL MAKE NO FINAL DECISION ABOUT WHETHER THE MARRIAGE CAN BE SOLEMNIZED UNTIL THE COUPLE HAS COUNSELED WITH THE CLERGY AT LEAST ONCE.

Permission for Remarriage

Special preparations are necessary if one or both of the parties have had a previous marriage dissolved by annulment or divorce. The Rector must receive permission from the Bishop of the Diocese of Southern Virginia prior to the wedding. Because of the additional time needed to counsel the couple and obtain the Bishop's consent, a **minimum of 60 days is required**. The couple can discuss the procedure for this consent with the Rector at the first counseling session.

Attendance at Ascension

The Sacrament of Marriage is to be lived out in the context of Christian Community. We expect that you will attend worship and other activities both before and after your wedding so that you can experience the life we share. Of course, you are welcome to become active members of the congregation.

Arrangements for the Ceremony

- The service of Christian Marriage is properly celebrated in the Church or in the Ward Memorial Chapel (which seats less than 50 people and does not have a musical instrument). The Clergy has rarely seen circumstances that warrant having the service in another location.
- The Clergy of Ascension will be the celebrant at all weddings held at Ascension. Episcopal clergy and those from other traditions are encouraged to participate in the service. The couple should discuss this matter with the clergy as soon as possible since only (s)he can offer such an invitation. The couple is encouraged to invite a friend or relative with a strong reading voice to proclaim the reading(s) from Holy Scripture. Inviting readers to attend the wedding rehearsal is appropriate.
- Our parish has a rich musical tradition. Hymn singing is an important addition to most weddings and is strongly encouraged. The couple should schedule a meeting with our music director at their earliest convenience to select music. (See Appendix II for more details about the selection of music).

- **Decorative Flowers:** Any florist of your choice may be used; however, the church has an ongoing arrangement with The New Leaf (627-6028). The Church only allows flowers in the large central vase on the shelf beneath the cross on the East end of the Church. The vase has a diameter of 7 ½ inches. No aisle runners are permitted. *If you choose to let another florist arrange your flowers and you wish to leave them for the church service the next Sunday, let the New Leaf know so they will not provide flowers or flower guild members to do the weekly arrangements.*
- The Parish Sexton is responsible for straightening the church before and after the service.* (see Appendix III)
- A bulletin can be an important aid to worshipers, especially when many of those attending are not Episcopalians. The clergy and secretary will be happy to help prepare and print such a program. Bulletin covers are available at local church supply houses or online and are the responsibility of the couple. (The secretary can give you suggestions for online orders.) The clergy must approve all bulletin text before it is printed.
- The couple must obtain a Civil Marriage License from the Clerk of the Court of the City/County in which one member of the couple resides. This license should be delivered to the clergy **at least two days** before the wedding.
- The Church permits photography following the guide found in Appendix IV. No flash photography is permitted from after the Bride's entrance until the final procession. The photographer may take posed photographs immediately after the service. **THE COVENANT AGREEMENT FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHER (Appendix V) MUST BE SIGNED AND RETURNED TO THE CHURCH OFFICE ONE WEEK BEFORE THE SERVICE. A FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE PROCEDURES CAN RESULT IN THE PHOTOGRAPHER BEING BARRED FROM FUTURE WEDDINGS.**
- Videotaping is permitted using available light from the balcony. A Videotaping Covenant is enclosed (see Appendix VI).
- Brides and their wedding parties may dress in the Lounge. A full length mirror is available. Grooms and their attendants may dress in the conference room.
- The throwing of rice, confetti, flower petals, etc., on church premises is forbidden. Bird seed and bubbles are permissible.

Fees

The Parish does not charge members for the use of the Church for worship services. Nonmembers should be aware that members pledge an average of \$1200 per year for the support of this Church. We expect that nonmembers will make a substantial contribution to the Church of the Ascension for the use of the buildings.

The clergy do not charge for their time, but couples should be aware that the average wedding requires the clergy to spend more than ten hours in planning, counseling, rehearsing and conducting the service. An Honorarium will be gratefully accepted. (suggested \$200)

Musician: \$200 (Additional charge for soloists)

Sexton: \$75

Rose Hall is available for receptions, if desired, at a rental cost of \$150. The Church prohibits serving alcoholic beverages other than beer, wine, or champagne, and you must obtain an ABC license to do this. (see Appendix III)

If any of the above expenses represent a heavy burden, please let the clergy know so they may make appropriate adjustments at their discretion.

We urge that all fees be paid before the day of the rehearsal.

Wedding Arrangements Check List

1.	Initial conference with Clergy
a.	Arrange and schedule pre-marital counseling sessions
b.	Discuss date of your wedding
2.	Reserve date and hour of service
3.	Confer with musician
4.	Send checks to Ascension for music, sexton, rental, before the service
5.	Deliver marriage license to parish office (at least 2 days before service)
6	Deliver ABC license to parish office (if applicable) at least a week before service
7.	Arrange for delivery of flowers during office hours (9-4 M-F) or one hour prior to service
8.	Clear parish policies with photographer and make sure covenant is returned
9.	Schedule rehearsal

Important names and telephone numbers

Church of the Ascension (757) 423-6715
nbeamon@ascension-norfolk.org

The musician, sexton, clergy, and secretary are all available through the church phone number or email.

+++++

Wedding Payment Schedule

_____	Honorarium for Clergy	\$200.00
_____	Musician*	\$200.00
_____	Sexton (church)**	75.00
_____	Nonmembers' contribution	
_____	Rose Hall for reception	150.00
_____	Sexton's fees for reception	75.00
	Total due:	\$_____

*Additional fees are required for organist's rehearsals with instrumentalists and/or vocal soloists. Fees for other musicians are arranged with the individual musicians.

**Required
(Please return this section of the page with your payment.)

Appendix I

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Declaration

of Intention

We,

and

desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the liturgical forms authorized by this Church.

We believe it is for the purpose of mutual fellowship, encouragement, and understanding, for the procreation (if it may be) of children, and their physical and spiritual nurture, and for the safeguarding and benefit of society, and we do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God's help thereto.

Signature of Groom

Signature of Bride (Maiden Name)

Dated _____ **A. D.** _____

**Appendix II
Wedding Music**

Christian Marriage is a solemn and public covenant in the presence of God. The Celebration and Blessing of a Christian Marriage is a sacramental rite of the Church. In The Book of Common Prayer, the Marriage service is set in the context of Holy Eucharist.

As at any act of liturgy in the Episcopal Church, the music chosen for the celebration and blessing of a marriage must be appropriate. Secular music is usually disallowed, and while there is somewhat more latitude in the choice of instrumental music, all music with texts, whether sung or played, should be selected with this rubric in mind:

"The words of anthems are to be from the Holy Scripture, or from this Book, or from texts congruent with them." The Book of Common Prayer, 1979, page 14.

The Parish musician will assist in the selection of appropriate music, but the clergy is the final arbiter.

The Parish musician will play at all weddings. (S)he should be contacted soon after your wedding date is set, or at least two months prior to the date. You may arrange a conference to discuss music or you may leave the choice entirely up to the musician. Instrumental and vocal soloists may also be arranged through the musician.

In unusual circumstances, a guest musician may play for your wedding. The Parish musician must first interview and/or audition the guest musician who must be qualified and who will agree to follow the music guidelines of the Parish.

Should the Parish musician be unavailable to play for your wedding, the Church will provide a qualified substitute who will be paid the regular fee.

In the event you prefer other instrumental or vocal music *in lieu of* the Parish musician for the marriage service, you must clear your arrangements with the musician and clergy in order to make sure your plans preserve the sanctity of the occasion.

**Appendix III
Reception and Cleanup procedures**

In the event you decide to use Rose Hall for your reception, we ask that you provide your own catering services. You will be required to provide the food, beverages and paper products. The equipment of the church is NOT available for use. The kitchen is available for layout and assembly, but not cooking. The cleanup fee is \$75.00 to ensure that Rose Hall is cleaned.

Please be aware that if you decide to serve beer, wine, or champagne at your reception, you must purchase a **one-day banquet license** from the Virginia Alcohol Beverage Control Board. You may apply online. We ask that you provide a copy of the license to our office a week before your reception.

We ask that Rose Hall be in usable condition for the next day of business (*i.e.* If you use it on Saturday night, we must be able to use it for our normal purposes on Sunday morning).

The Sexton's duties in regard to cleaning afterwards are to empty the trash cans, mop the floor and reset the room for its normal use. He is not responsible for cleaning the kitchen, taking down decorations, putting away dishes, or anything of that nature.

**Appendix IV
Guide for Wedding Photographers**

**The Church of the Ascension
405 Talbot Hall Road
Norfolk VA 23505
(757) 423-6715**

We at Ascension are eager to cooperate with you in providing a photographic record of the marriage service for the couples being married in our church. We do ask that you and your staff remain keenly aware that this is a worship service of the church and should be approached with reverence.

The following policies must be strictly observed:

1. One flash photograph may be taken of the bride and her escort as they enter the church and one of the bride and groom as they leave the church. These may be taken at a position no closer to the altar than the fifth pew from the rear of the church.
2. No other flash photographs may be taken during the actual service in the church.
3. Photography scheduled before the service should be scheduled so that the wedding will begin on time.
4. Photography after the service is limited to 25 minutes. The clergy will remain if needed for the purpose of reenactments.

The information and regulations above respond to the questions frequently asked. By providing it in advance, we hope that you will be able to plan efficient use of time and energy to provide the most memorable record of the service.

**Appendix V
Covenant Agreement for Photographers**

I have read the policies and procedures of The Church of the Ascension regarding the taking of photographs during a wedding, and I understand them completely.

Signature of Photographer _____ Date _____

Address _____ Phone Number _____

**Appendix VI
Covenant Agreement for Video Operators**

**The Church of the Ascension
405 Talbot Hall Road
Norfolk VA 23505
(757) 423-6715**

I understand that I may set up my equipment in one location only, designated by the clergy of The Church of the Ascension.

I also understand that I may not use special lighting for this service.

Signature of Video Operator

Date

Address

Phone Number

**Appendix VII
ALTAR GUILD WEDDING FORM**

Name(s): _____

Date of Event: _____ Time of Event: _____

Where will the service be held? Chapel or Sanctuary

Will communion be offered? Yes or No

How many guests do you anticipate will attend? _____

Which altar hangings do you prefer?

- _____ White (white/with blue trim)
- _____ Festival (Beige background with multicolored embroidery)
- _____ No preference

Will you be using the candelabras? Yes or No

Candles are not provided by the church. Candelabras require 3/4" diameter, 12 inch white drip less candles to be provided no later than 72 hours prior to the event.

Will you be using hurricane candle holders in the windows? Yes or No

Candles are not provided by the church. Lamps require tapered, 10 inch white drip less candles to be provided no later than 72 hours prior to the event.

Will you be using the unity candle stand? Yes or No

What do you want done with the candle stubs?

Boxed for pick up _____ Donate to church _____

Will you be using a kneeler with pillow for the ceremony? Yes or No

Are there any special conditions that altar guild should be aware of?

PLEASE PLACE A COPY OF THIS FORM IN THE ALTAR GUILD MAIL BOX AND ON THE SACRISTY DOOR

**Appendix VIII
Covenant for the Couple**

We have read the policies and procedures for the conduct of weddings at The Church of the Ascension very thoroughly and fully understand them.

We understand that the Clergy and Altar Guild have full responsibility for the wedding and that no other "consultants" are necessary.

We understand that our service will adhere to the doctrine and disciplines of the Episcopal Church.

We understand that there will be no alcohol other than beer, wine, or champagne on the premises.

We understand that photographers and video operators will abide by the policies of the church.

We understand that all fees will be delivered to the Parish Secretary in advance.

Signature of the Bride

Date

Signature of the Groom

Date