

Guidelines for Weddings

Grace Episcopal Church Chattanooga, TN

A message from the Rector to the Engaged Couple

Planning a wedding is a joyful undertaking and I am delighted that you are interested in being married in Grace Church. The Church takes marriage very seriously: "Holy Matrimony is Christian marriage, in which the woman and man enter into a life-long union, make their vows before God and The Church, and receive the grace and blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows." (*Book of Common Prayer, p. 861*) Marriage is a sacramental rite of the Episcopal Church, and a wedding is a sacred liturgy. I look forward to getting to know you or deepening my relationship with you as we discuss this understanding marriage and together plan your wedding.

(Note: The Rector performs all weddings at Grace Church unless his/her permission is otherwise given.)

Requirements for Marriage in the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of East Tennessee

Requirements for Marriage at Grace Episcopal Church

- At least one person must be baptized.
- The wedding date must be approved by the Rector. Contact Grace's Parish Administrator for information regarding this and to set-up an appointment with the Rector.
- If either member of the couple has been divorced, a minimum of six months is required after the divorce decree is finalized in order to allow for adequate premarital preparation and to obtain the written permission of the diocesan bishop.

Obtaining a Marriage License in Tennessee

Contact Hamilton County, Tennessee Court house for current information.

<http://www.countyclerkanytime.com/marriage/default.htm>

Requesting a Wedding at Grace Episcopal Church

Contact the Parish Administrator, Mrs. Janice Eernisse, to request a date for your wedding. The Parish Administrator can be contacted by telephone (423) 243-3253 or email jeernisse@saygrace.net. The Parish Administrator will contact the Rector and respond to your request for a wedding ceremony at Grace Episcopal Church.

Marriage Preparation

Premarital counseling is required prior to marriage at Grace Episcopal Church. This time helps prepare you as a couple for a lifelong commitment to each other in God's care. You will discuss Christian marriage, communication skills, resolving disagreements, care and nurturing of children, finances, spiritual growth.

The Episcopal Church requires a mandatory minimum of three pre-marital counseling sessions with clergy before the wedding. Sessions will be planned approximately a month apart from each other. **The couple is responsible for completing all sessions before the wedding day.**

Important Information

Declaration of Intent: The couple must sign a Declaration of Intent document with the Rector to solidify their intention to be married at Grace Episcopal Church.

Parish Administrator: The Parish Administrator (or our Wedding Consultant, in the case of a non-member wedding) will be your main contact as you prepare for your marriage and planning your wedding at Grace Episcopal Church.

Rector: The Rector is in charge of all worship services. The Rector reserves the right to approve or decline approval of any arrangements regarding your wedding service.

Director of Music: The Director of Music has the *right of first refusal* for providing music at all weddings at Grace Episcopal Church. The Director must approve all musical selections and additional musicians for the wedding. The Director strives to provide music appropriate to the beauty and solemnity of the occasion. All music must be consistent with rubrics and traditions of the Episcopal Church. *Recorded music is not permitted.* The couple is responsible for scheduling an appointment with the Director at least **three** months before the date of the wedding service. *(Fees for the organist which are included below in our fee schedule include: 20-30 minute prelude; postlude not to exceed 10 minutes; wedding rehearsal, not to exceed one hour; consultation, at least one month prior to the wedding date.*

Altar Guild: Grace Church Altar Guild is made of devoted volunteers who care for the church and prepare the nave for worship services such as Holy Eucharist, Weddings, Funerals and Baptisms.

Wedding Director/Planner: A couple may hire a wedding Director/planner to make arrangements for the wedding service. Please be advised that during the rehearsal and wedding service, the Rector will be in charge. The Rector will direct the wedding service, including the couple, the wedding party, the rehearsal and the wedding Director. Remember that all decisions **MUST COMPLY** with regular Episcopal Church practice and worship.

- Photography. Marriage is considered a holy sacrament in the Episcopal Church and, as such, any actions that detract from the sacred nature of the liturgy are discouraged. Wedding guests are asked not to take photographs during the service. *This will be noted in all wedding programs.* Professional photography may take place during the liturgy, provided that the photographer meet with the Rector beforehand and abide by his/her guidelines.
- Videography: Grace Church can arrange for an unedited video, taken by stationery camera in the balcony of the church for a nominal fee, upon request. No other videography is allowed.
- We request that post-ceremony photography in the church not exceed 30 minutes. After 30 minutes, the photographic session may be interrupted by Altar Guild and custodial staff. **Please advise professional photographers AND FAMILY MEMBERS of these policies.**

Balcony: No seating is available in the balcony. Wedding guests are not allowed in the balcony. Photographers are allowed in the balcony **ONLY** by permission.

Wedding Gifts: Due to safety and security concerns, no Wedding gifts may be left in the Narthex (the anteroom) of the church. Please make arrangements to have gifts taken to The Alcove in the Church Office Building. Please designate someone in the wedding party to oversee this area at all times. Grace Church will not be responsible for the oversight and security of wedding gifts.

Carillon: Grace Church carillon plays on the hour. The chimes can be turned off during the wedding.

Flowers and other Decorations:

- Only one formal flower arrangement may be placed on a pedestal behind the altar. The church has a brass urn that can be used to hold the arrangement. Simplicity in floral arrangements is strongly encouraged. NO OTHER FURNITURE OR DECORATIONS may be placed in the altar area (eg: Unity Candle/Sand, extra candelabras, etc.)
- The formal altar arrangement should arrive at the church by 9:30 am on the day of the wedding when Altar Guild members are available to help place the flowers. The church is locked after the Altar Guild members leave.
- Pews may be decorated as desired. Some brides have rented candleholders that clamp to the pews.
- Flowers may be placed in other areas of the church.
- Kneeling cushions may be placed at the altar rail, if requested.
- Wall sconces located on the columns in the Nave may be lit for the service by request.
- Hangings or other decorations MUST be approved by the Rector before the wedding.
- Aisle runners may NOT be placed in the central aisle due to safety concerns.
- The chancel, altar, central cross, and candles in the nave are focal points during a worship service. They cannot be moved, covered or altered in any way. Nothing can be done to mar or deface these furnishings or fixtures (no pins, staples, tacks, nails, etc.).

Wedding Rehearsal: A mandatory wedding rehearsal will take place the evening before the wedding. Please come prepared to “walk through” the service and honor the solemn yet joyful atmosphere of the upcoming wedding. All wedding party members should plan to arrive 30 minutes before the scheduled rehearsal time. Altar Guild members and church personnel are volunteering their time after usual work hours to help coordinate details for your wedding. Please be respectful of their time. Participants **should not consume alcohol before arriving for the rehearsal.**

Rice: Throwing rice or confetti is not allowed on church property after the wedding or reception. Birdseed is permitted outside.

Bubbles: Use of bubbles to celebrate the newly married couple creates a hazardous, slippery, sticky floor condition. Do not blow bubbles on church property.

Pets: Pets are not allowed to participate in any way during the wedding ceremony.

Child Care: Church facilities are not available for babysitting during the wedding ceremony.

Church Policies

- Grace Episcopal Church is a smoke-free building.
- No weddings are held during Lent, or the weeks prior to and after Christmas and Easter.
- The marriage rite is performed according to *The Book of Common Prayer* unless permission is otherwise granted by the Rector, in the case of non-member weddings.
- Only one wedding is permitted per day.
- Weddings are held between 11:00 am and 6:00 pm.
- Rehearsals are scheduled for the day before the wedding. Please remind your wedding party to arrive 30 minutes before the scheduled rehearsal appointment.
- Allow one and one quarter hours for the rehearsal.
- The Undercroft (Parish Hall) may be rented and used for your reception with permission. Schedule your reception with the Parish Administrator when you schedule your wedding day.
- Fourth Floor is available for the groom's party to dress for the wedding.
- Consumption of alcohol is not permitted on church grounds prior to any service.
- Alcohol may be permitted at receptions with the permission of the Rector.
- A simple wedding program is available on request and can be provided by the church. Alternatively, the couple may arrange for more elaborate programs independently. In the latter case, a proof of the program must be approved by the Rector no later than one week prior to the wedding.
- The ushers should be in place and ready to greet guests one half hour before the wedding service begins. We recommend a minimum of one usher for every 50 invited guests.

