

*Holy Matrimony at
The Church of the Holy
Trinity*

Information and Planning Guide



Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
615 Sixth Avenue South
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
615 256-6359

Welcome to The Church of the Holy Trinity

This brochure has been designed to offer an opportunity for you to understand the wedding ceremony as it takes place at The Church of the Holy Trinity. As is stated in the Book of Common Prayer, "Holy Matrimony is Christian marriage, in which the man and woman 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."

In this very special time, we are honored to perform this vital service in the lives of two people as they become one. The intention of the information here is to answer all the possible questions that can come up but we realize that there may be more. After you have completely read through the material, there will be time for additional questions that you may have. If you decide that Holy Trinity may be the place for your wedding, an appointment can be made with the Rector in order to get the process of planning started.

There are a number of guidelines to this process and it may seem daunting. In our awareness of the importance of this crucial time in the life of two people, we want to make sure that there is a very clear understanding of expectations to facilitate better planning and to eliminate any confusion in the process. It is not our attempt to complicate it is more our intention to foster comfort and confidence in the ceremony itself. No questions are foolish and we hope that we create an environment that will facilitate and encourage them.

Holy Trinity does not charge for weddings with the only exception to that being that the organist will charge a fee. As you read through this brochure, please keep that in mind. There will be many people here at the church that will take part in the preparation. They consider this to be a ministry and as such we do not charge.

Who is eligible to be married in the Episcopal Church?

Subject to canonical guidelines the following are preliminarily eligible to be married at Holy Trinity:

- Members of the parish and children of members.
- People who are not currently members but agree to participate in premarital counseling and worship in this parish during the period of preparation.
- People who are relatives (such as children) of Episcopal Priests in good standing in the Episcopal Church.

Prior to scheduling a marriage a minimum of 30 days is required after the couples first meeting with the Celebrant. There are obvious complications as we go through life. There are often obstacles that may seem overwhelming as a couple prepares to arrange for a wedding. It is important for you to know that as you have that first meeting, these can be discussed. If this is not the first marriage for either party, it too, can be discussed with the Rector at the first meeting.

What does the Pre-marital Counseling Involve?

Adequate discussion, instruction and counseling of the couple, together, must be done prior to the marriage. Marriage is more than a rite and a ceremony, it is a sacrament asking God's blessing on a covenant relationship.

The Celebrant must weigh how well the couple is aware of the major implications of this lifetime commitment they are making and be convinced that they have a realistic understanding of what marriage is. The rich words in the beginning of the Prayer Book service describe this and can be valuable counseling tools:

The union of husband and wife 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.

It is because of this that it would seem that at least 3-6 pre-marital instruction sessions would be needed, depending on the circumstances. In unusual circumstances, marriages may be performed or blessed for

couples not closely related to the parish, but only at the specific request of the Clergy-in-Charge of one of the couple's home parishes to the Celebrant. The Celebrant must be convinced that adequate marriage counseling has been done by either priest, by either him or herself, or by the home Parish Priest.

Once approved for marriage, what are the next steps?

It is very helpful to have a checklist of things that now have to be done. The items on that list include the following:

- Complete and sign a copy of the Declaration of Intent to Marry
- Decide on a projected date and time for the rehearsal
- Check the schedule of the officiating clergy person
- Decide on whether there will be a Holy Eucharist
- Decide the readings, psalms, and gospel
- Schedule an appointment with the organist for choices of music
- Schedule an appointment with the Flower Guild director
- Marriage license

What about the Service itself?

All services at the church are open to the public. Hence, there is no such thing as a private service, although most weddings are only attended by those that are invited. The Book of Common Prayer will be followed without variation. There are options provided within the directions in the Book of Common Prayer and so flexibility does exist and the Rector can help with those choices. In addition, there are number of Scripture possibilities for the readings. Here, too, if you need help with the choosing of lessons, the Rector will help.

It is important that the wedding begin on time. We recognize that it takes much coordination with many people involved and at times things can be complicated. However, we rely on many people from the parish to help with the wedding and it is fair that they should know the time to begin and therefore the time that they will have to commit to the wedding. Out of courtesy to them, it is very helpful when things go as planned.

It is most appropriate and desirable that the ceremony of marriage between Christians be conducted within the rite of the Holy Eucharist which should be offered to all baptized Christians. This would also be something to discuss with the Celebrant regarding the service plan.

What about a possible role for clergy of other Christian denominations in the ceremony?

Clergy of other Christian denominations may assist the Celebrant. This again would be something that is ultimately the decision of the Celebrant and it is something that should be discussed during the counseling and planning sessions with the Rector.

What about Photography and/or Video?

We encourage you to have photographs taken of your wedding ceremony. However, we do follow some guidelines. During the rehearsal, the photographer has free reign to take all the pictures he or she wishes. During the ceremony itself, there are some guidelines that must be followed. No lights or flashes are allowed. The photographer will be allowed to take pictures from the back of the church providing a camera that does not make a noise is used. The area to take the photos will be pointed out to the wedding party as to ensure that the photographer understands. Prior to and after the ceremony, again, the photographer will be able to take as many photos as he or she wishes. A marriage ceremony is a holy event. As with all liturgies in the church, reverence is to be maintained and pictures and noises from cameras are distracting to this sacred ceremony in the lives of the groom and bride.

What about Music for the Service?

The Organist at Holy Trinity is a professional musician and as such, there is a fee for her services. She will meet with you and go over the various music options that she has and discuss with you the ideas you may have. She has a number of years experience in doing this and is more than willing to help you in this aspect of the wedding plan. The ceremony itself is ordered according to the rubrics of the Prayer Book. The music is infused throughout where various options for hymns, psalms, anthems and instrumental music can be used. The Organist will assist you in planning the music.

What is the Flower Guild?

The Flower Guild's primary purpose is the decoration of the altar area with flowers for the Sunday services. In the planning of a wedding, the Flower Guild Director will meet with you to arrange for flowers. If you want to use a particular florist this is fine. The only thing that Holy Trinity requires is that the altar flowers that are used in the wedding remain for the following Sunday worship service. Such things as throwing flower petals, rice or bird seed can not be done in the wedding. This is primarily for safety reasons.

What is the Altar Guild?

The Altar Guild is responsible for setting up the altar for all the services in the church (candles, linens, chalice, etc). Once all the aspects of your ceremony have been discussed and determined, the Rector will communicate to the Altar Guild what is needed for the wedding ceremony. If you have questions regarding this aspect of the ceremony, please discuss this with the Rector. Remember, it is our intention for you to understand every aspect of the ceremony itself. We are more than willing to answer any questions that you may have.

What about Wedding Consultants?

Holy Trinity has an exceptional wedding team. They have much experience in coordinating weddings and they can help as you make your plans. We are not adverse to wedding consultants but we see little need for them as the wedding follows what is in the Book of Common Prayer. We do not charge for weddings at Holy Trinity so it seems that this might be an added expense for someone that had little say in the service itself.

Obviously for receptions and/or pre wedding parties, they may be very helpful but in terms of the wedding service itself, there is little influence that they would have.

Does Holy Trinity offer a facility for a reception?

Holy Trinity has a parish hall that can be used for receptions. We do allow alcoholic beverages but only beer and wine. No other alcoholic beverages are allowed. There is a kitchen area in the parish hall that can be used as well.

Final Word

As has been stated in a number of sections in this brochure, there will be many questions regarding the coordinating of a wedding here at Holy Trinity. Please, do not be bashful as questions allow for answers that help everyone to be comfortable with a clear understanding of how everything will happen.

We are especially happy that you are considering Holy Trinity for your wedding plans. As you have read through this brochure and perhaps kept a list of questions, please make sure and bring them when you meet with the rector as this will be a convenient time for them to be asked.

