

The Episcopal Diocese of Southwestern Virginia Marriage and Blessing Liturgies of The Episcopal Church

At the 78th General Convention, which met in Salt Lake City from June 25 through July 3, 2015, two resolutions were adopted regarding marriage and blessing liturgies. Following their adoption, the House of Bishops approved a Mind of the House Resolution to clarify how these rites are to be used in the dioceses of The Episcopal Church. I affirm these decisions and set forth the following guidelines for use in this diocese.

Two new rites are authorized for Trial Use during this Triennium. They are *The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage* and *The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage 2*. These rites may be used by all couples beginning on the first Sunday of Advent (November 29), 2015.

The 1979 Book of Common Prayer rites for *The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage*, *The Blessing of a Civil Marriage*, and *An Order for Marriage* remain in use for opposite-sex couples.

Until the first Sunday of Advent (November 29) of this year, *The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant*, which was adopted at the 77th General Convention three years ago, may be used for same-sex couples. It may not be used with opposite-sex couples who choose not to marry for financial or other reasons. After November 29, 2015, this liturgy of blessing may be used solely for same-sex couples in jurisdictions where same-sex marriage is not legal. Because marriage of same-sex couples is legal in Virginia, this rite will not be authorized in the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia after November 29, 2015.

While Section 7 of Canon 18 states that, "It shall be within the discretion of any Member of the Clergy of this Church to decline to solemnize or bless any marriage," the General Convention Resolution A054 stipulates: "Bishops exercising ecclesiastical authority or, where appropriate, ecclesiastical supervision, will make provision for all couples asking to be married in this church to have access to these liturgies. Trial use is only to be available under the discretion and with the permission of the diocesan bishop." Therefore, access to these Rites must be made available to all couples. A Member of Clergy may only decline to personally officiate, but may not represent that they are unavailable. If declining, the Member of the Clergy will inform the Bishop's office so that other arrangements for marrying the couple may be offered.

The following canon on the Celebration and Blessing of Marriage will take effect on November 29, 2015. It states the responsibilities of the clergy and of couples who desire to marry in the Church.

Canon 18: Of the Celebration and Blessing of Marriage

Sec. 1. Every Member of the Clergy of this Church shall conform to the laws of the State governing the creation of the civil status of marriage, and these canons concerning the solemnization of marriage. Members of the Clergy may solemnize a marriage using any of the liturgical forms authorized by this Church.

Sec. 2. The couple shall notify the Member of the Clergy of their intent to marry at least thirty days prior to the solemnization; Provided, that if one of the parties is a member of the Congregation of the Member of the Clergy, or both parties can furnish satisfactory evidence of the need for shortening the time, this requirement can be waived for weighty cause; in which case the Member of the Clergy shall immediately report this action in writing to the Bishop.

Sec. 3. Prior to the solemnization, the Member of the Clergy shall determine:

(a) that both parties have the right to marry according to the laws of the State and consent to do so freely, without fraud, coercion, mistake as to the identity of either, or mental reservation; and

(b) that at least one of the parties is baptized; and

(c) that both parties have been instructed by the Member of the Clergy, or a person known by the Member of the Clergy to be competent and responsible, in the nature, purpose, and meaning, as well as the rights, duties and responsibilities of marriage.

Sec. 4. Prior to the solemnization, the parties shall sign the following Declaration of Intention: We understand the teaching of the church that God's purpose for our marriage is for our mutual joy, for the help and comfort we will give to each other in prosperity and adversity, and, when it is God's will, for the gift and heritage of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of God. We also understand that our marriage is to be unconditional, mutual, exclusive, faithful, and lifelong; and we engage to make the utmost effort to accept these gifts and fulfill these duties, with the help of God and the support of our community.

Sec. 5. At least two witnesses shall be present at the solemnization, and together with the Member of the Clergy and the parties, sign the record of the solemnization in the proper register; which record shall include the date and place of the solemnization, the names of the witnesses, the parties and their parents, the age of the parties, Church status, and residence(s).

Sec. 6. A bishop or priest may pronounce a blessing upon a civil marriage using any of the liturgical forms authorized by this Church.

Sec. 7. It shall be within the discretion of any Member of the Clergy of this Church to decline to solemnize or bless any marriage.

Click here to read Resolution A054 regarding the authorization of liturgies for trial use:

http://www.generalconvention.org/gc/2015-resolutions/A054/current_english_text

**Grace Episcopal Church
123 West Washington Street
Lexington, Virginia 24450
540-463-4981**

Requirements of the Church

Weddings celebrated at Grace Episcopal Church must be approved by the Rector. Permission for non-staff clergy to use the church for a wedding must be obtained from the Rector.

An active affiliation with Grace Episcopal Church is required. If you are not a pledging parishioner, a fee schedule for use of the church is available from the Parish Office.

At least three pre-marital counseling sessions are required between the priest celebrating the marriage and the couple. If either party has been divorced, the consent of the Bishop of the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia is required before an Episcopal priest can officiate. At least one partner must be an active member of the parish. The Parish Office will complete the form necessary for the Bishop's approval. Please allow at least three months for this process.

Weddings are not scheduled during the season of Lent.

For the Rehearsal

Wedding directors are welcome, but it is understood that the priest conducts the rehearsal and the marriage service.

For the Ceremony

Candles

Use of candles in the chancel area is limited to Eucharistic candles, if there is communion, and two candelabra supplied by the Altar Guild. Candles may be placed in the windows, if used with globes.

Flowers & Ribbons

Flower arrangements are limited to two altar arrangements-one vase on either side of the cross. Please notify the Administrative Assistant of your choice of florist and whether you desire to leave the flowers for Sunday morning. Any decorations other than altar flowers must be approved by the Rector.

Photographs & Videographers

No photographs are permitted during the ceremony. Stationary video cameras may be used when approved by the Rector. Photographs may be taken in the church before and after the ceremony. The church will remain open for one hour following the service.

The Reception

The Parish Hall is available for receptions, with the following stipulations:

- Diocesan guidelines restrict the use of alcoholic beverages on parish premises.
- Caterers must contact the Administrative Assistant to confirm arrangements.
- The throwing of rice, birdseed, or flower petals is not permitted on parish grounds.

Fee Schedule

Clergy

There is no fee for services of clergy of this parish; however, an honorarium is appropriate. Clergy not associated with this parish may set their own fee.

Parish Organist

The Parish Organist has right of first refusal for all weddings performed at the church. The fee for the Parish Organist is \$300. The fee for the Parish Organist Friday night rehearsal is \$50. If the wedding party desires alternative accompaniment or an alternate organist, the Parish Organist approves the musician(s), and all musical selections. Special music which she must learn for a service, or additional rehearsing with a soloist, warrants a higher remuneration. Guest musicians specify their own fees.

Altar Guild

The Altar Guild prepares the altar for the wedding and also prepares for Holy Eucharist. A contribution of \$50 to the Altar Guild Fund is appropriate.

Sexton

The sexton's fee is \$150 (\$250 if the Parish Hall is used for a reception). In addition to her services in preparing the church for the wedding and cleaning up after, she also is on hand to assist the wedding party and clergy during the rehearsal and the wedding.

*Please make checks payable to Grace Episcopal Church.
Musicians and others contracted by the family should be paid directly.*

Wedding Reservation Form

Grace Episcopal Church

123 West Washington, St.

Lexington, VA 24450

Email: office@graceepiscopallexington.org

Office: 540-463-4981

Couples Names: _____

Contact Person: _____

Home Address: _____

**E-mail/Phone Number
For Contact Person:** _____

Date(s) of Building Use: _____

Room(s) being reserved: _____

Time of Building Use: _____

Set-Up Requirements: _____

Fees required at time of reservation:

- \$500.00 – Rental of church space
- \$150.00 - \$250.00 – Sexton
- \$300.00 – Grace Episcopal Organist (first right of refusal)
- \$50.00 – Organist for Friday Rehearsal (if wanted/needed)
- \$50.00 – Altar Guild

Total \$ _____

Agreement signature: _____

Date: _____

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 Book of Common Prayer.

We believe that 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 raising of children and
their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord.

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: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____