

Marriage at St. Peter's

We are delighted that you have chosen to be married in the Church. Christian marriage is a holy sacrament, and your decision as a couple to seek God's blessing in this way is a cause for great rejoicing. There is great dignity and joy in the bond and covenant of marriage. We rejoice with you as you begin now to prepare for your marriage.

As marriage is a holy sacrament, the purpose of this letter is to outline the way you would prepare for Christian marriage at Saint Peter's Church.

Background

It may not surprise you to read that Saint Peter's receives many requests for marriages. We are blessed with a beautiful and historic sanctuary which lends itself to dignified and gracious weddings. Saint Peter's is also located near many venues for receptions, and this is a further reason for the considerable number of requests. Of course, the parish's own members will also wish to be married in their church. For these and other reasons, we need certain policies in place to be fair to parish members, parish staff, and any couple seeking to be married at St. Peter's.

Consider

Saint Peter's has been able to offer its ministry and church sanctuary to the community for weddings for over 300 years. This has been possible for three centuries because of the faithful membership of the parish. Indeed, it is church members attending faithfully each Sunday who have kept our doors open to this very day. Without the commitment of such faithful members, Sunday-to-Sunday, there would not be a Saint Peter's Church in which to be married. We must honor their commitment with our own. Therefore, our policy is to limit marriages to those who are presently members *or are willing to become members of this parish*.

Nor should this requirement be surprising. Christian marriage presupposes church membership as a foundation stone of the couple's life together. To approach this sacrament with integrity, we need first to commit ourselves to church attendance. We therefore ask that any couple wishing to marry at Saint Peter's attend services on three consecutive Sundays prior to their first appointment with the clergy. Faithful Sunday attendance is expected thereafter through the wedding date. It is our great hope that Saint Peter's will remain your church home for years to come, but we are always here to help establish membership elsewhere should you move from the area. Church services at Saint Peter's are held on Sunday at 8:30 am and 10:30 am.

If you are from out of the area, and Saint Peter's is sought for your marriage for family or similar reasons, the clergy at Saint Peter's will need to work with clergy in your hometown. If this relationship with a local church has yet to be established, Saint Peter's requires that the local relationship be established so that we can work with your local clergy and inform them of our attendance and other policies in marriage preparation. We have always found that clergy work well together in such cases.

Premarital appointments

Your marriage preparation will involve meeting with the clergy a minimum of five times for premarital instruction and wedding planning, and some marriage preparation can be longer. We typically seek a minimum of 6 months to prepare a couple and a year from the engagement to the wedding date.

Baptism

It is required in the Episcopal Church that at least one member of the couple is a baptized Christian. If you are unsure of your Baptism, we would be happy to help you research whether you have already been baptized. If you have not already been baptized, we would invite you to consider if you'd like to be. We can easily prepare you for that Sacrament along with beginning your marriage preparation.

Remarriage

Marriage requests involving a prior divorce require special attention. Clergy are required to seek permission of the Bishop for a second marriage. If obligations to the prior spouse are being met faithfully, no animosity remains, and issues of an emotional or spiritual nature underlying the divorce have been dealt with appropriately, second marriages are usually approved by the Bishop. More than one divorce will require extraordinary circumstances for consideration, but clergy are available to speak with you about the possibility of such cases. In all cases, we care deeply for you as a couple and desire only to see the new marriage thrive.

Roman Catholics & Remarriage

From time-to-time divorced Roman Catholics seeking to find alternative to the annulment process of their Church come to the Episcopal Church. Please know that we respect the moral authority and canonical procedures of your Church. We thus do not want to provide marriages to couples who in their hearts wish to remain Roman Catholic but seek to avoid the annulment process or other needed reconciliation with their church. We will, however, gladly meet with couples who are sincerely exploring the Episcopal Church as their future home.

The Liturgy

The Order of Service for Marriage is taken from the Book of Common Prayer. This Service is the only one authorized by the Episcopal Church and so is used at Saint Peter's. We believe you will find it both elegant and rich in theological meaning as you become united in Holy Matrimony. The form of the Service can be found at the following link:

<http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/marriage.doc>

Programs and Ushers

The Service leaflets that will be used at your wedding will involve taking the above link and inserting your names where appropriate, as well as listing readers and members of the bridal and groom's party. You can also insert a note about the reception or other related matters. You may add tasteful cover art and use ribbon to bind the booklets. We will walk you through this process. The copying and production of the leaflets are the responsibility of the couple. It is generally a modest expense.

Ushers are usually taken from the groomsmen. Your ushers will distribute your programs and seat guests prior to the start of the Service. We will cover all of this at your rehearsal.

Rehearsal

The rehearsal is held the evening before the wedding date. If everyone is present on time, the rehearsal usually takes about an hour. Please know that you do not need to memorize your vows. You will simply repeat them after the priest.

Paperwork and Fees

Our Office Manager will need you to complete a form for our parish records as well as our office's preparation. She can be reached at 518-434-3502.

The following is our fee schedule here at St. Peter's. Please make out separate checks to the following parties:

1. **St. Peter's Episcopal Church:** \$1,500.00
2. **Organist:** \$350.00
3. **St. Peter's Church Altar Guild:** \$75.00
4. **James Shortall (or Wayne Hill):** \$75.00 (Sexton) or \$125 if it is a Holiday Weekend.

In cases of genuine hardship, some fees may be negotiated.

We will hold the date for your wedding *after* the **St. Peter's Episcopal Church** fee has been received. All other fees are to be sent to the church office one week prior to your wedding date.

Music

Saint Peter's organist will work with you on choosing music appropriate to your wedding. Music selections will be traditional and dignified. Popular music is not used at St. Peter's. Any use of outside musicians must be approved by our organist.

Photography

Flash photography may only be used during the procession of the bride and bridal party and during the recession of the couple and all their attendants. Non-flash photography may be used during the service. With the exception of the procession and recession, those taking photographs must be stationary. Any video-taking of the wedding must respect the same rules. These guidelines will avoid distractions during the service which take the focus off the couple and the sacrament due to excessive movement and flashing lights.

Marriage Licenses

Your marriage license can be obtained at any New York County Clerk's Office. Please call your local County Clerk to determine proper identification and paperwork needed. It is good to seek your license a few weeks prior to the wedding date to avoid any unforeseen problems. *As a matter of law, the clergy cannot marry any couple without a valid Marriage License.*

Flowers

It is essential that all flowers arrive *and be in place* at least 4 hours prior to the wedding. Please alert your florist to this necessary rule. The rule seeks to avoid last minute chaos. In the event of a Saturday wedding date, our parish's Flower Guild requests to know whether you plan to take the flowers with you or will leave them for Sunday Service. We appreciate all floral gifts, but please be assured that there is no expectation that the flowers will remain.

Conclusion

Once more, we rejoice with you as you plan to enter Christian Marriage. We look forward to working with you as a couple in the months to come. May God bless you in the holy time of preparation.

At the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage

One or more of the following passages from the Holy Scripture is read. If there is to be a Communion, a passage from the Gospel always concludes the readings.

From the Old Testament:

A Reading (Lesson) from the Book of Genesis [1:26-28]

Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’

So God created humankind in his image,

in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’

A Reading (Lesson) from the Book of Genesis [2:4-9, 15-24]

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.’

Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.’ So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

‘This at last is bone of my bones

and flesh of my flesh;

this one shall be called Woman,

for out of Man this one was taken.’

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

A Reading (Lesson) from the Song of Solomon [2:10-13; 8:6-7]

My beloved speaks and says to me:
Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away;
for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtle-dove
is heard in our land.
The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away.
Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm;
for love is strong as death,
passion fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
a raging flame.
Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it.
If one offered for love
all the wealth of one's house,
it would be utterly scorned.

A Reading (Lesson) from the Book of Tobit [8:5b-8]

Tobias said to Sarah: "We praise thee, O God of our fathers, we praise thy name for ever and ever. Let the heavens and all thy creation praise thee for ever. Thou madest Adam, and Eve his wife to be his helper and support; and those two were the parents of the human race. This was thy word: 'It is not good for the man to be alone; let us make him a helper like him.' I now take this my beloved wife, not out of lust but in true marriage. Grant that she and I may find mercy and grow old together." They both said "Amen," and slept through the night.

From the New Testament:

A Reading (Lesson) from the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians [3:1-13]

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. 13 And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

A Reading (Lesson) from the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians [3:14-19]

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

A Reading (Lesson) from the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians [5:1-2, 21-33]

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body. ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

A Reading (Lesson) from the Letter of Paul to the Colossians [3:12-17]

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

A Reading (Lesson) from the First Letter of John [4:7-16]

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we

loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

From the Holy Gospel:

The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to Matthew [5:1-10]

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

‘Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

‘Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

‘Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to Matthew [5:13-16]

You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

‘You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to Matthew [7:21,24-29]

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord”, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

‘Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!’

Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to Mark [10:6-9,13-16]

But from the beginning of creation, “God made them male and female.”

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.’

1 People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.’ And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to John [15:9-12]

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Declaration of Intention

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

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 to 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.

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 the Groom

Signature of the Bride (Maiden Name)

Dated: _____ A.D. _____