

**SHERWOOD EPISCOPAL CHURCH
5 SHERWOOD ROAD
COCKEYSVILLE, MD 21030
410-666-2180**

**THE CELEBRATION AND BLESSING OF A MARRIAGE
Customary of Sherwood Parish**

The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church shall be adhered to in all matters, as well as the admonitions of the Bishop of the Diocese of Maryland and the rules and requirements of Sherwood Parish. All marriages shall take place within the church building unless substantial cause be shown to the Rector for an alternate site. The Rector may decline to solemnize any marriage, or may decline to permit the marriage to take place in the parish church. All marriages at Sherwood Parish Church will be conducted by the Rector unless she/he gives explicit permission for another clergy person to conduct the ceremony. No outside clergy person will be approved as celebrant who is not an ordained priest/pastor in good standing in a mainstream Christian denomination.

The Canons of the Episcopal Church state that to be married in the church is to be married in the context of “the Community of Faith.” This means that marriage in our church is not a private contract between two people, but part of the community life of the parish church. Within the context of the parish, the couple will have their marriage solemnized now and supported in the years ahead.

PREMARITAL COUNSELING, PARTICIPATION IN PARISH LIFE

Those desiring to be married at Sherwood or by Sherwood’s clergy must attend at least three premarital sessions with the Rector. In addition, it is expected that the couple to be married are actively involved in the life, mission, and ministry of this particular community of faith. Inactive members (for example, one who grew up as a member of the congregation but no longer worships here) may be married at Sherwood *at the discretion of the Rector*.

LICENSE

The couple being married is responsible for obtaining a Maryland marriage license valid in Baltimore County. The license should be obtained at least a month before the scheduled date of the wedding, and shall be given to the Rector any time prior to or at the wedding rehearsal.

WEDDING REHEARSAL

The date and time of the wedding rehearsal shall be arranged with the Rector at least 30 days before the marriage. Rehearsals normally last for about one hour. To allow leeway, one and a half hours will be scheduled.

DINNERS AND RECEPTIONS

Rehearsal dinners and wedding receptions are social events apart from the church service. The Rector does not expect to be invited to such events; if you wish to include the Rector as a guest, she/he should be invited in the same manner in which other guests are invited.

CONCERNING COSTS

There is never a fee for the use of the church for the marriage ceremony of an active parishioner. However, a \$1000.00 church use fee will be charged for any marriage ceremony if neither party is an active parishioner; this fee must be paid at least one month in advance of the date of the wedding. The Rector does not charge a fee for her/his ministrations in connection with any wedding. An honorarium to the Rector is at the discretion of the couple being married, and is by no means expected. The couple being married are expected to pay the organist's fee (see below). The cost of other expenses is borne by the parish, within reason; a donation to offset these costs is always welcome.

MUSIC

All music shall be arranged with and approved by the Rector and the organist of Sherwood Parish.

The organist has "right of first refusal" for all marriage services at Sherwood Parish Church. If the organist is available to play for a wedding service but the couple prefer to use a different organist, the church organist shall receive his customary fee, even though he does not play for the service. The organist's fee shall be paid prior to the beginning of the service.

If soloists or instrumentalists are used in conjunction with the organ music, arrangements must be made with the organist, under the direction of the Rector, who has full supervision of all music used at Sherwood Parish Church, including at which points during the service the music may be used. Financial arrangements with musicians other than the organist are to be handled directly by the wedding party.

LITURGY

The marriage liturgy shall be that provided in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Elements not prescribed in the prayer book liturgy (such as "unity candle") shall not be included in the liturgy.

CHURCH DECORATIONS

The Altar Guild of the church shall provide the proper frontal and vestments, bridal kneeling cushion, Eucharistic candles, office candles, plus bread and wine if the service is to include Holy Eucharist.

The florist or person coordinating use of flowers in the church must consult with the Altar Guild concerning the day and time for decorating the church and the arrangement of flowers or other decorations.

There is to be **absolutely no** throwing of rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals, or any other substance, either indoors or outdoors. Bubble-blowing is permitted outdoors.

The bridal party is responsible for cleaning up all spaces used before, during, and after the ceremony. If there is to be a reception on church premises, a security deposit may be charged in advance, to be returned upon satisfactory completion of clean-up.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY

There shall be no flash photography and no light-emitting videography during the service. If a videotape of the service is being made, the recorder must be on a tripod in a fixed location in one of the side aisles or in the back of the center aisle. A single designated photographer using a non-flash camera may take photographs from a single location in a side aisle or in the back of the center aisle during the ceremony. Formal pictures may be taken within the church immediately following the service.

CANONS OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH REGARDING HOLY MATRIMONY

The Minister shall ascertain

1. The right of the parties to contract marriage according to the laws of the state of Maryland.
2. That both parties understand that Holy Matrimony is a physical and spiritual union of a man and a woman, entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent of heart, mind and will, and with the intent that it be lifelong.
3. That both parties freely and knowingly consent to such marriage, without fraud, coercion, mistake as to identity of a partner or mental reservation.
4. That at least one of the parties has received Holy Baptism.

The Minister shall instruct both parties as to the nature, meaning and purpose of Holy Matrimony.

The intent to marry shall have been signified to the Minister at least **three months** before the service.

There shall be at least two witnesses.

The Minister shall record the marriage in the Parish Register.

The Minister shall require the parties to sign the Declaration of Intention.

It shall be within the discretion of the Minister to decline to solemnize any marriage.

When marital unity is imperiled by dissension, it shall be the duty of either or both parties, **before** contemplating legal action, to lay the matter before a Minister of this Church; and it shall be the duty of such Minister to labor that the parties may be reconciled.

If either party is divorced, the following shall also apply

1. At least three months notice of the intent to marry shall be required.
2. A copy of the divorce decree and a copy of a signed Declaration of Intention shall be submitted to the Bishop at least 30 days prior to the proposed marriage service.
3. The divorced person or persons shall agree that continuing concern will be shown for the well-being of any children of the prior marriage.
4. The Rector must consult with and obtain consent from the Bishop before she can agree to officiate at the marriage service.

5. **The date of the marriage is not officially set until consent has been obtained from the Bishop's office.**

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

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DECLARATION OF INTENTION

We,

(print name)

—

and

(print name)

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 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

Signature

Date