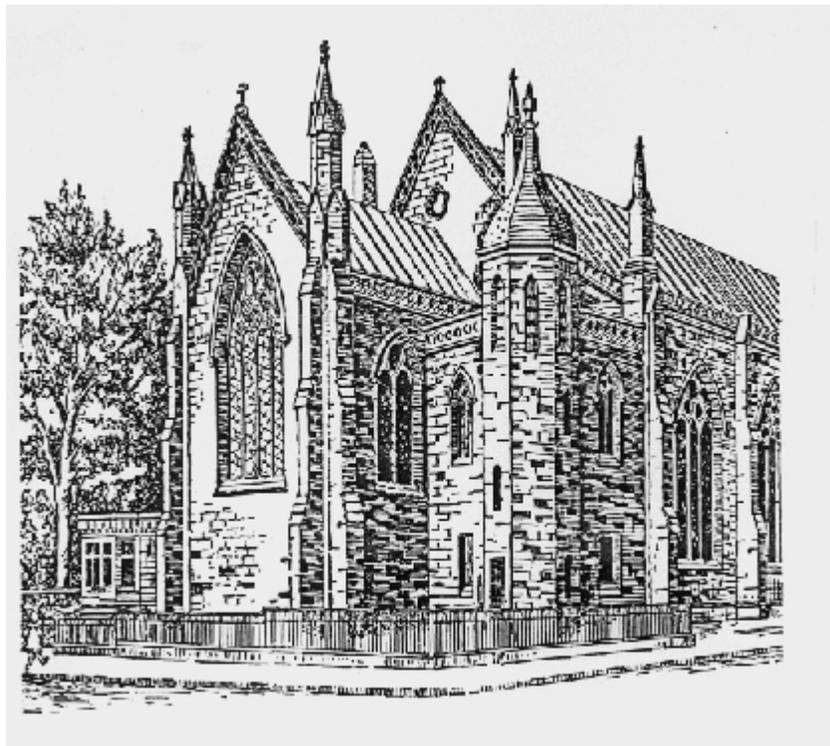


**The Celebration and Blessing
of a Marriage**

Grace Church Brooklyn Heights

Wedding Information Booklet



**Grace Church Brooklyn Heights
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Brooklyn, New York 11201
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www.gracebrooklyn.org

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations on your engagement. We pray that God will bless your life together and make your love a sign of hope and joy to the world. Thank you for your interest in celebrating your wedding at Grace Church.

This booklet is designed to assist you in preparing for the celebration and blessing of your marriage in the Church. Planning for a marriage includes not only scheduling and countless details, but also a set of convictions about marriage, and what those convictions mean in the lives of two people. The following paragraphs describe the convictions Christians have about marriage and the procedures for marriage that are customary at Grace Church.

Please read this booklet carefully. It will answer many questions and serve as a reliable aide in your understanding of, and preparation for, marriage at Grace Church.

Who May Be Married In This Church?

Grace Church is committed to marriage equality for all. Couples often seek to be married in the Church because it provides an attractive, traditional setting. However, sometimes the same couples have little or no relationship to the life of the Church. At Grace Church we anticipate working with couples who seriously seek to make Christ and the Church a part of their marriage relationship. We urge all couples who are contemplating marriage to worship at Grace Church and share in the life of the congregation.

Initial Contacts

Please make all initial inquiries regarding weddings through the Parish Office. Please then read this booklet thoroughly. If, after carefully considering the commitments that are expected of you, you wish to continue to explore the celebration of your marriage at Grace Church, please call the Parish Office again. You will then be put in touch with a member of the clergy, who will meet with you.

Possible dates for your wedding will only be discussed after you have met with one of the clergy. Until that time no commitments will be made to the Parish Calendar. The Parish Office holds the calendar and confirms all scheduling matters.

One of the Parish clergy will officiate at all marriages. Weddings usually take place on Saturdays, with services beginning between 11:00 am and 5:00 pm. When necessary, weddings can be arranged on week days during the same hours. Normally, weddings do not take place on Sundays or during the Church season of Lent.

Canonical Requirements

The Canon laws of The Episcopal Church requires that at least 30 days' notice be given for the wedding and that the clergy ascertain:

- the rights of the parties to contract a marriage according to the laws of the state;
- that Holy Matrimony is understood to be a physical and spiritual union of two people, by mutual consent of heart, mind, and will, and with intent that it be life long;
- that both parties freely and knowingly consent to such marriage, without fraud, coercion, mistake as to identity of a partner, or mental reservation; and
- that at least one of the parties has been baptized.

Remarriage

If either party has been divorced, you will need to complete an "*Application for Remarriage*" form. Please complete the form and submit it with a copy of the divorce decree to the priest who will be officiating at your marriage. He or she will go over this with you and from there it is submitted to the Bishop of Long Island for approval. An official certificate of the divorce decree will need to be included with the application. Since this is due at the Bishop's office thirty days prior to the wedding, it will be important to do the preliminary meeting with the priest at least forty-five days in advance. If this is a third marriage for either or both parties, further consultation with the Bishop's office may be necessary.

Premarital Counseling

The clergy are required to "instruct both parties as to the nature, meaning, and purpose of Holy Matrimony, or ascertain that they have both instruction from persons known to him or her to be competent and responsible." Normally this process will begin at least three months in advance of the wedding.

PLANNING THE WEDDING

As you plan, please remember that the officiating priest is in charge of the wedding and must approve all final arrangements. Several areas of practical concern include:

The Officiant

Ordinarily, the clergy of Grace Church preside at marriages. Arrangements for other clergy to participate may be made with your officiating priest.

Wedding Consultants

Outside wedding co-ordinators are not allowed at Grace Church in any official capacity.

Music

The wedding ceremony is a service of worship, and music for the service must be appropriate in expressing gratitude and praise to God for the gift of marriage. Wedding music plays an important role in helping friends, family, and the couple celebrate your marriage, combining both the joy and sacredness of the event.

Secular or popular songs of special meaning to you should be reserved for the wedding reception.

Music for the service is under the direction and supervision of our Organist and Choirmaster, Paul Richard Olson, who is expected to play all weddings.

After your initial meeting with the Parish clergy you should make an appointment with Mr. Olson to discuss your service.

He will be happy to meet with you personally, exchange ideas about your service and play through various selections. He can help you discover the right combination of music and can suggest additional musicians if you choose.

In choosing music, keep in mind that the choices should reflect your relationship with each other and God but also be suitable for the entire community you have invited to gather.

If Mr. Olson is not available to play at the wedding, he will arrange for a substitute organist. If he is available but the couple desires a guest organist, Grace Church follows the policy of the American Guild of Organists. The guest organist must meet with Mr. Olson and, if the guest organist is approved for the service, it will be your responsibility to arrange for and pay the guest organist's fee, as well as Mr. Olson's fee.

Vocal and instrumental soloists and our Parish Choir can add great beauty to a service. The Church's staff of professional singers is available. Mr. Olson can help arrange for this. He also has a list of instrumentalists and a fee schedule for their services.

Service Leaflets

Printed service leaflets will enable your wedding guests to participate fully in the service. It is a record of your service which can be kept to reflect upon in the years to come. Many couples already plan to print programs for their wedding. Leaflets printed by a professional printer must first be approved by the officiating priest.

Flowers

Excessive decorations are to be avoided. The Parish Office will assist you with the selection of an approved local florist. Altar flowers become a memorial to the glory of God once they are placed on the altar and they may not be removed for use elsewhere. They become the couple's gift for the following Sunday service. If there are other flowers and decorations, please plan to remove these from the Church immediately following the service. The flower girl may drop silk petals as she processes. Please do not throw real flower petals, birdseed, rice or confetti in the Church or on the grounds.

Candles

Candles are always lit on and around the altar. Arrangements can be made for the use of aisle candles, which are placed along the outer aisles. There is an additional charge for their use. The Unity Candle ceremony, which is sometimes found in other traditions, is not used at Grace Church, as the vows and the giving and receiving of rings mark the central symbols of Christian marriage.

Pets and Animals

Other than sight and hearing assistance dogs, no animals are allowed in the Church during the service.

Photographs

Your photographer may take photographs up to thirty minutes before the wedding and thirty minutes immediately following the service. Because the wedding is an act of worship, no member of the congregation is permitted to take pictures during the service. Ushers should make sure that guests with cameras understand this. The wedding photographer may use a flash when photographing the processional and recessional. During the service the photographer may be at the back of the church taking pictures with ***no flash*** equipment. If other photography, including videotaping, is desired this will need to be discussed with the officiating priest.

Photographers must speak with the officiating priest prior to the wedding and confirm their verbal agreement to this strict policy. All photography after the ceremony must be completed within 30 minutes.

Cell Phones and Pagers

Please advise your guests to turn off all electronic devices prior to the beginning of the service.

The Bridal Party

The Wedding party should come to the church dressed for the ceremony. The Bride's and Groom's parties will wait in separate rooms. Members of the wedding party should be present thirty minutes before the service. Absolutely no alcoholic beverages are permitted on Grace Church's premises before, during, or after the wedding, and no food or drink is allowed in the Church. A receiving line does not work well immediately after the wedding and should be delayed to the place of the reception.

The License

The marriage license must be brought to the Parish Office **seven days** before the rehearsal, for the appropriate paperwork to be completed. No marriage can take place without the receipt of the marriage license.

Rehearsal

The rehearsal is usually held at 4:00 pm on the day before the wedding. The rehearsal is under the direction of the officiating priest. The purpose of the rehearsal is to rehearse the wedding service and ceremonial so that all involved will be familiar with the space and comfortable with their participation. Usually, only the immediate families and the wedding party attend. Please allow plenty of travel time to arrive at the Church on time, especially considering Friday night traffic congestion and parking. ***Rehearsals start on time and are limited to one hour.***

Reception in the Guild Hall

Receptions are rarely held in the Guild Hall, particularly for a late Saturday afternoon wedding. Occasionally, smaller receptions are held in the Guild Hall, which require special arrangements with the Parish Office. A Certificate of Insurance, letter of agreement, sexton and rental fees, and deposits are required.

CHECK LIST FOR WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS AT GRACE CHURCH

- ❖ First inquiry to the Parish Office.

- ❖ Read through the Marriage Information booklet.

- ❖ Preliminary meeting with a priest.

- ❖ If it is desired by the priest to proceed with the wedding at Grace Church, then during an early meeting with the priest, complete an “Application for Marriage” form. Also, if applicable, fill out “Application for Remarriage” paperwork.

- ❖ Sign the “Declaration of Intention” form.

- ❖ Set a date on the Parish Calendar with Priest and/or Parish Office.

- ❖ Arrange for first pre-marital counseling session.

- ❖ Meet with the Organist/Choirmaster regarding music for service.

- ❖ Meet with the Parish Office regarding service leaflet.

- ❖ Follow-up meeting with your priest.

- ❖ Bring Marriage License and fees to Parish Office one week before the wedding day.

- ❖ Rehearsal

- ❖ Wedding Day

DECLARATION OF INTENTION

At a preliminary meeting with the priest, when the priest has determined that the wedding can take place, the bride and groom shall sign the following declaration:

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 between 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 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 hereto.

Signature of Bride (Maiden Name)

Signature of Groom

Date _____

A.D. _____

WEDDING FEES

Church Fee: The wedding fee is \$3,000 for non-members. This fee enables Grace Church to continue its mission and ministry. While there is no fee required for the clergy, there are additional fees for the Organist, any other musicians, and the Sexton.

Musicians: The organist receives \$300 for time spent planning, practicing, and playing at the rehearsal and the service. If additional time is required of the organist because the service includes a vocalist, instrumentalist, or special music, there will be additional fees, which the organist will set. The organist can arrange for additional musicians, whose fees are paid directly to them. The choir could be available to sing at weddings for a fee to be determined by the organist. Please consult with him.

Sexton: The sexton (custodian) on duty receives a \$150 fee for work done before and after the service. Please obtain his name from our Parish Office and make a check payable to him directly.

All fees must be delivered to the Parish Office at least 7 days in advance of the wedding.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Must we be members of Grace Church to be married here?

No. We only require that at least one member of the couple be a baptized Christian. However, priority is always given to couples with an established relationship with the parish community.

One of us is Christian and the other comes from another faith tradition. Can we be married at Grace Church?

Interfaith marriage requires special care and counsel. If a couple is considering such a marriage, they should seek the counsel of their religious leaders long before attempting to plan a marriage service. If the priests at Grace Church are confident that in marriage the couple can continue to live and express their faiths while fulfilling the expectations of Christian marriage, they will be glad to officiate at the service. Aspects of other faith traditions may be included in the wedding service.

Does the church permit divorced persons to marry?

Yes. The gospel is not about punishing people for their pasts, but about inviting them to new life. However, before the church will marry a divorced person, it is essential that an honest assessment of the former marriage be taken. Our priests are trained to assist with such discussions and will lead the couple through this conversation in pre-marriage preparation, discussing factors that caused the failure of the earlier marriage.

Can we include family and friends in the service?

It is appropriate for family and friends to be invited to participate in the leadership of the service, often being asked to read from Scripture. We ask that you keep in mind, however, that in the same way that weddings are times of joy, they can also be times of considerable stress. Children are particularly vulnerable to these pressures and are often not well served

by being expected to be a part of the wedding party. We discourage the inclusion of very young children as flower girls, ring bearers, junior brides maids or groomsmen.

Does the church require pre-marriage counseling?

Yes. When a couple makes a commitment to be married at Grace Church, the wedding date is established and reserved. Shortly thereafter the officiating priest will contact the couple to arrange for several meetings. Though each priest at Grace Church has a slightly different approach to pre-marriage preparation, the conversations generally focus on the couple's relational history and expectations, family backgrounds, work and financial issues and pertinent areas that will impact the development of the marriage.

Can we include Holy Communion in our wedding service?

Holy Communion may be celebrated if both husband and wife are professing Christians. When the Holy Communion is celebrated, it must be offered to all people attending the service. The priest will be glad to speak further with you about this at your first pre-marriage conference. The inclusion of the Holy Communion usually extends the service by no more than fifteen minutes.

How long is a typical service?

Services range in length from thirty-five minutes to an hour, depending on the order of worship. Because of the complexities of travel within the city and the difficulty out-of-town guests may have finding the church, we have found it prudent to start wedding services five minutes after the invited time. Because of this, at least an hour should be planned for the service, and at least a half an hour should be planned between the end of the service and the reception. If the reception is some distance from the church, you may want to consider some form of chartered transportation for your guests. Cabs can be difficult to find on Saturday afternoons.

May we use an aisle runner?

No. Cloth or plastic aisle runners detract from the beautiful, marble floor of Grace Church, not to mention the bride's dress.

Is the church accessible for people with disabilities?

Grace Church has a ramp entrance on Grace Court. There is a lift available in the Parish House for mobility-challenged guests. At this time, there are no ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant rest rooms. Sound system devices for the hearing-impaired are available.

Is parking available near the church?

On-street parking around the church is scarce. There is, however, a parking garage at Willow Place and State Street. We recommend that, if possible, wedding guests use public transportation. There is a "no parking" area immediately in front of the Church where limousines may be parked during the service as long as the driver remains in the car.

How do we obtain a marriage license?

A New York State license is required for marriage, though it need not be secured in New York City. It is always advisable to check the hours of operation at the Office of Marriage Licenses (In Brooklyn: Municipal Building, 2nd floor, 210 Joralemon Street; In Manhattan:

Municipal Building, One Center Street, 2nd floor south). The license is good for 60 days, but not for the first 24 hours after it has been issued. A blood test is not necessary. If one or both of you have been divorced, it is necessary to present a copy of all pertinent official court divorce papers to obtain a marriage license. After the ceremony, the wedding license needs to be signed by you, two witnesses (often the Best Man and Maid/Matron of Honor) and the officiating priest. It will then be mailed by the Parish Office to the Clerk of the City of New York for registration purposes. Thereafter you may secure a copy of your marriage license from the City. ***(Please note, the city does not automatically mail a copy of the signed license to you after the license is registered.)*** If you need proof of your marriage immediately following the wedding, please indicate that to the officiating priest, who can make a photocopy of the completed license and give it to you before you leave the church. For detailed information, visit www.nycmarriagebureau.com

Suggested Florists

These local florists know the Church well.

Floral Heights (Charlotte), 107 Atlantic Avenue, 718-625-2066

James Weir Floral Company (Estella), 160 Montague Street, 718-624-0270

Seaport Florist (Amy), 214 Hicks Street, 718-858-6443

PARISH CONTACT INFORMATION

Interim Rector

The Reverend Anne F.C. Richards
718-624-1850, extension 14
arichards@gracebrooklyn.org

Organist-Choirmaster

Paul Richard Olson
718-624-1850, extension 20
polson@gracebrooklyn.org

Parish Office

Parish Administrator
718.624.1850, extension 10
parishoffice@gracebrooklyn.org

A Prayer for Marriage

O gracious and everliving God, you have created us male and female in your image: Look mercifully upon this man and this woman who come to you seeking your blessing, and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep the promises and vows they make; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.