

Marriage Ceremony Customary

Grace Episcopal Church - Galveston, Texas

We at Grace Episcopal Church extend our best wishes on your engagement and embrace you as you begin your journey toward the day you will make your vows before God and, in the presence of family and friends, become one with each other. A marriage ceremony in the Episcopal Church is a solemn celebration of a covenant between two people. Holy matrimony is considered one of the seven sacraments (an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace) through which the gift of the Holy Spirit empowers you to love and serve each other until parted by death. Thus, this joyous celebration is first and foremost an act of worship. From that day forward, you will share, nurture, and support each other's joys and sorrows; and you will create memories together to cherish over the years. We wish you a lifetime of happiness and a marriage that holds Christ always at the center.

Weddings at Grace Church are Episcopal ceremonies from the 1979 Book of Common Prayer and other approved liturgical resources, officiated by the Priest of Grace Church. He/she may invite visiting Episcopal clergy to assist or perform the ceremony in his/her place if necessary. As weddings are joyous celebrations, they are not held during Lent or Holy Week. We do not hold weddings on major feast days (Christmas Eve/Day, Easter, and Pentecost) and generally refrain from the following major holidays and weekends: New Year's Eve/Day, Labor Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day and Thanksgiving. We also do not hold weddings on Sundays, as that is reserved for our worship services and fellowship activities, and we hold only one wedding in a weekend. We encourage you to consider the celebration of the Holy Eucharist (Holy Communion). Since this is a service of worship, the priest directs both the rehearsal and wedding and has the final say in all aspects of both. Unity candles are not included in our ceremonies. The seating capacity in the church is approximately 240.

At least one of you must be baptized to be married at Grace. The Episcopal Diocese requires, except in an extreme emergency, at least thirty days' notice of your intent to marry; and if either of you have been divorced, other canonical requirements must be met, which we will share with you.

Every couple must complete premarital preparation by the officiating priest (or another representative approved by the priest) for approximately three or four sessions prior to the celebration and blessing of your marriage. This important process of preparation for your married life together takes time. If possible, please plan to begin at least six months before your wedding date. Because the priest is not a licensed therapist, he/she may refer you to a professional for more in-depth counseling if deemed necessary. If so, you must do the number of sessions the therapist recommends before having your marriage blessed at Grace.

Rehearsal

Rehearsals are usually held on the eve of the wedding day, preferably at the same hour as the ceremony to avoid confusion of the arrival time and allow sufficient time for a thorough rehearsal and dismissal to the rehearsal dinner. We ask that all participants attend: wedding party, ushers, readers, and all family members included in the seating of the family. The Organist and/or hired musicians are not at the rehearsal unless requested to be, and then for an added fee.

Music

The music, musicians and vocalists are under the discretion and approval of the priest and Organist and should meet the standards of the church. Secular music is not permitted in the ceremony, and should be reserved for the reception.

Flowers, Decorations & Other Items

It is customary that the couple leaves the altar flowers for the following Sunday morning service, and a dedication will be included in that Sunday's service bulletin in honor of their marriage. The arrangements must be of fresh flowers and greenery. The pews may be decorated along the center aisle for the ceremony. Fresh rose petals are not allowed inside the church, as they pose a potentially slippery hazard to attendants and guests; however, silk petals are allowed. Bridal runners are also not allowed as they cannot be safely secured and therefore pose a tripping hazard. We suggest guest books be reserved for the reception, as the limited amount of space in the church creates a backup of guests as they are arriving. White is the liturgical color for festivals and celebrations and will be the color of any altar frontals and clerical vestments. Candles lighting the center aisle are provided.

Photographs & Videos

We realize the value of capturing treasured moments of your ceremony and will work with your photographer and videographer to allow this, yet still preserve the reverence and sanctity of the ceremony. Flash photos are permitted during the processional; but once both have reached the altar and until the couple leaves the altar married, only natural-light photos are allowed. During the processional, the photographer may locate one-third of the way down the center aisle and then move to the back of the church for full-view photos of the ceremony and respectfully move along the side aisles behind the columns. Video filming is allowed from the choir chancel behind the Lectern, but only from a stationary tripod and with no additional lighting or movement. Photos may be taken in the church and on the grounds prior to the ceremony and after the ceremony in the church for no more than twenty minutes out of respect for guests waiting at the reception and for us to prepare the church for the following Sunday worship service. Your photographer and videographer will be sent these guidelines and asked

to read, sign, and return an agreement. In order to minimize distractions from worship, a message will be included in your program prohibiting photos and videos by guests during the ceremony and requesting that cellular phones be silenced.

Wedding Ceremony Program

Your program is prepared by us as a keepsake for you and your guests and for all in attendance to follow and participate fully in the ceremony. We will work with you on any personal touches you may wish to include.

Showering the Couple

Although this is usually reserved for the reception, some couples request it upon leaving the Church. In this case, we require advance notification and that family, attendants and guests be advised of our restrictions. Fresh rose petals, sparklers, or bells outside the front entrance are permitted. Rice, birdseed, and bubbles are not, as they leave a slippery hazard. Plastic or paper confetti, even biodegradable, are also not allowed, as they are unsightly on the grounds.

Sexton

The Sexton's cleaning services and availability during the ceremony are not paid by the church; therefore, this expense is covered by the couple as shown in the fee schedule.

Respect of Holy Ground

Alcoholic beverages are not allowed on the premises at any time, and we kindly request that any alcohol consumption prior to arrival be kept to a minimum to assure a coherent and respectful rehearsal and ceremony. Anyone who is or appears to be intoxicated will be asked to leave the premises and will not be allowed to participate in the rehearsal or ceremony. Smoking is not permitted anywhere in the church buildings.

Fees

Couples married at Grace Church are asked to assume certain expenses. All fees must be paid one week prior to the wedding. Please make separate checks or cash envelopes payable as shown below:

Facility Usage Fee (payable to Grace Church), includes Ceremony Program & Pew Candles	\$ 950
Refundable Security Deposit (payable to Grace Church), returned following the ceremony if no damages to church property and furnishings are found.	\$ 200
*Officiating Priest	\$ 300
**Organist/Pianist (payable to Aaron Hervey)	\$ 200
Sexton (payable to Elizabeth Pugh)	\$ 100
Wedding Ceremony Coordinator (payable to Patricia Bevil)	\$ 250
Total	\$2,000

*It is a long established custom to privately honor the Officiant with a gift of appreciation at an amount of the giver's discretion. Your gift is most appropriate and would be gratefully received. The above amount represents a minimum established by the Diocese covering the ceremony and rehearsal and does not take into account time spent on premarital preparation.

**The Organist/Pianist generally is not present at the rehearsal. If it is requested, the fee is \$275.

Wedding Ceremony Coordinator

Grace Church's Wedding Ceremony Coordinator is responsible for responding to your initial inquiry with information on weddings at Grace. Once your wedding has been approved by the Priest, the Coordinator will begin working with you, the officiating priest, your florist, photographer, videographer, musicians and others involved. This includes all the information for your ceremony program and being present at your rehearsal to assist the priest. On your wedding day, she will arrive early to open and prepare the church, marriage documents, and aisle candles; receive the flowers from the florist; pin corsages and boutonnieres; and attend to any needs that may arise. At the appointed time, she will gather the family for their special seating, prompt the processional and remain throughout the ceremony. After the ceremony, she will remain to prepare the church for the following Sunday morning worship service and mail the marriage license.

We recognize that professional wedding consultants and planners are of great importance to the smooth unfoldment of the wedding day. They are welcome to attend the rehearsal and ceremony, but they will not be involved in their coordination as these are under the discretion and direction of the priest.

January 10, 2018