

# GETTING MARRIED AT TRINITY

THE CELEBRATION OF HOLY MATRIMONY AT TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH OSHKOSH

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## INTRO

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If you're reading this because you're planning a wedding, congratulations on your engagement! The people and clergy of Trinity Parish are glad you're thinking about marking the beginning of your married life with the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. God bless you both!

Weddings can be joyous, fun, stressful, overwhelming and many other emotions. The process leading up to your wedding day is designed to be a time when you continue to grow into the marriage into which God has called you. Perhaps you're already busy with your planning, and you know already how stressful this can be. We hope this document will answer some questions. We hope as well that you will consider getting married at Trinity, and invite Jesus Christ into your lives together.

Finally, then, please know our hope and prayer that your preparation for and celebration of marriage will be a time of joy and meaning to you, your friends, and your families. Please feel free to call Father Chris Arnold, Trinity's priest (920-231-4240), or send an e-mail to [chris@oshkosh-episcopal.org](mailto:chris@oshkosh-episcopal.org) to make an appointment to discuss further questions and plans.

## MAY WE BE MARRIED AT TRINITY?

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The marriage service, or the rite of Holy Matrimony, is a Christian worship service. It is also a legal ceremony recognized by the state of Wisconsin. As such, there are a few considerations.

### The religious requirements

As a parish of The Episcopal Church, we are guided by canon law (church law), and some of the canon law applies to marriage. Those laws state that:

- Both of you must 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. This is basically between you and the State of Wisconsin (see below, the Civil Requirements).
- Since this is a Christian religious ceremony, at least one of you has to be a Christian, which means that at least one of you is baptized.
- Both of you will have to sign the Declaration of Intention, which states that you agree with the classical Christian teaching about marriage. It's in the appendix of this document.
- Both of you have been instructed by a 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. We cover this during the pre-marriage conversations (see below).

### What if I'm divorced?

According to our theology, Christian marriage is intended to be a lifelong union, but we recognize the reality that not every marriage turns out well. As a matter of pastoral care and accommodation, The Episcopal Church permits those who have been through a divorce to be married again in the church.

However, this requires the permission of the bishop. You will also need to provide documentation of your divorce or annulment. Notify Father Chris as soon as possible if either of you is divorced to make sure there is plenty of time to secure the bishop's permission.

## The requirements of the state

Well in advance of your wedding, you should know the civil guidelines to getting married in the state of Wisconsin. Nobody at Trinity is a legal expert; this side of things is your responsibility! You will bring your Marriage License to the Wedding Rehearsal and it will be signed (along with some other paperwork) right after the liturgy.

Here is information about marriage licenses in Winnebago County: <http://www.co.winnebago.wi.us/county-clerk/marriage-information>

If you wish one of Trinity's clergy to officiate at a wedding outside of the state of Wisconsin, we will check the local guidelines of that state.

## WHEN MAY WE BE MARRIED?

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We're willing to bet that you've told your friends and family and coworkers all about your engagement, and at least half of them have asked, "Have you picked a date?" It's a good question!

### How much notice do we need to give the church?

Most people begin planning 6-12 months ahead of time. Except in very unusual cases (such as a time of war), when the bishop may issue a dispensation from this requirement, **a minimum of 30 days' notice** is required for the celebration of a marriage.

If one or both of you has been through a divorce or annulment, there are extra steps involved in seeking the bishop's consent. Because of this, **a minimum of 90 days' notice** is required. Please do not announce the date of your wedding until the judgement has been returned by the bishop.

### When can we schedule the liturgy?

The scheduling of wedding services at Trinity depends upon the availability of the clergy and the worship space. Only one wedding service will be scheduled for any given day.

Weddings at Trinity may generally be scheduled on any day, calendar permitting, except during Holy Week, on Easter Day, on Christmas Eve, on Christmas Day, or when the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac is having their annual diocesan convention (which is usually in October). **Please make sure you've got the date on the Church's official calendar before you send out invitations!**

## GENERAL GUIDELINES AND COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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We'll go into more detail in the following sections, but here are a few key points to keep in mind:

- You'll do **Pre-Marriage Conversations**. This preparation for marriage is required by church canons (church law). Plan ahead for up to six sessions with Father Chris. Alternative arrangements can be made.
- Ordinarily Father Chris is the officiating priest for all weddings at Trinity. It is possible for other ordained ministers to assist in the liturgy. This is entirely at the discretion of Father Chris.

- Because Trinity is a parish of the Episcopal Church, all weddings at Trinity will be the official rite of the Episcopal Church. This is classic, and beautiful, and sacred, but it is also fairly set in stone.
- Sometimes couples want a beautiful building for their wedding, but they want Jesus left out of the service. We'll put it fairly bluntly: if you come to Trinity, you'll have a Christian service in a Christian church led by a Christian priest! We hope that's ok.
- Plan ahead for a wedding rehearsal typically the evening before the wedding.
- If you live in the Oshkosh area, please plan to attend Sunday services at Trinity during the preparation time if you are able. This is not a requirement but will help you understand the theology and faith community into which you are being married.
- The rector, using his best judgment, may decline to officiate in or to authorize the celebration of any marriage.

## Commonly-asked Questions

1. How many people does the church seat? – The church seats 180 comfortably. Additional seats can be rented to increase the seating capacity.
2. Can we have our wedding service elsewhere? – Certainly, but talk with the clergy first.
3. Can we write our own service or write our own vows? – All wedding services, including the vows, must be according to the liturgical rites that are found in the Episcopal Church's Book of Common Prayer.
4. Can we rent the church and have our own denominational or civil service? – Trinity is not available for rent and all services held at Trinity must be according to the Episcopal Church rites.
5. Can the Episcopal priest from my childhood assist at the wedding in Trinity? – Yes, with the rector's permission. If your priest is from another diocese, he or she also will need to receive permission of the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac.
6. I'm not Episcopalian. Can a minister from my denomination take part in the service? – While Father Chris will normally officiate at any wedding held at Trinity, other clergy are able to participate. Do talk this over with Father Chris if you're thinking about this. He will have the final say about if and how other ministers and clergy will be involved.
7. I've been divorced. Can I re-marry in the Episcopal Church? – Yes, although there are a few more requirements. Permission from the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac is required before the wedding may take place. Because of this extra step, the request needs to be sent to the Bishop at least 90 days before the planned wedding date!
8. How long does the wedding ceremony last? – That depends on several factors. A very simple wedding will last about twenty minutes. A wedding with Holy Communion, lots of music, etc. may be an hour or more.
9. May Holy Communion be a part of the service? – Yes, and it is strongly encouraged if bride and groom are baptized. In the Episcopal Church, all baptized people are welcome to receive Holy Communion. Those who are not baptized are welcome to receive God's blessing.
10. What about a marriage license? – The marriage license may be delivered to the church at any time before the wedding ceremony takes place. Please note: Without a valid marriage license in hand, the wedding may not take place.

11. Should I hire a wedding consultant? – That’s up to you. Do please keep in mind that that person will have very little to do with the planning of the actual wedding service, which will be done by you and the clergy.
12. Can we drink or smoke on church property? – Smoking is permitted outside the church buildings. Butts are to be disposed of in appropriate containers. The Episcopal Church has no moral objection to drinking alcohol, but wedding parties are encouraged to remain sober for the rehearsal and for the wedding day itself, at least until after the ceremony. Members of the Bridal Party who who up inebriated will not be allowed to participate in the wedding.

## PRE-MARRIAGE CONVERSATIONS

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This isn't just preparing for a wedding day. It's preparing for a life-long marriage. If you're seeking the blessing of the church for your wedding, we hope it means that you want the support of the church in your marriage. Because we want your marriage to get off to as strong a start as possible, you'll do pre-marriage conversations.

The Episcopal Church requires that all couples who desire to be married to meet with the clergy for pre-marriage conversations. Marriage holds the promise of great joy. At the same time, there are obstacles that can cause problems down the road if they have not been discussed beforehand. Normally, a couple should plan on these sessions, with each session lasting 60-90 minutes.

1. Theology of marriage/review policies/tour the space
2. Conversation session #1
3. Conversation session #2
4. Conversation session #3
5. Planning the Wedding Day

Ordinarily, a couple will do these pre-marriage conversations with Trinity's priest, Father Chris. If you live some distance away, we can make arrangements for you to do the conversations with someone closer to you. The wedding planning itself will happen with Father Chris in consultation with our organist, Marianne Chaudoir.

## DECORATING THE CHURCH

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Trinity is always a beautiful worship space, and a few well-chosen decorations can be the icing on the cake! Here are a few tips for decorating the church space.

### The Altar and Retable

The frontal, the fabric covering the Altar, will be white. The candles on the Altar and the pavement lights, the candlesticks in front of the Altar, will be in place and lit. No flowers or other decorations will be placed on on the Altar.

The retable is the shelf behind the altar. Outside of Lent, the 6 candlesticks and the brass cross will be in place there. The candlesticks will be lit only if there is a Eucharist as part of your wedding service. Typically flower arrangements are placed on the retable. Flowers may be left in the church for regular Sunday services as a reminder to the parish of your wedding.

## The Nave

The Nave is the main seating area outside the Altar Rail. You may use pew decorations, but they cannot be affixed by adhesive, tape, tacks, nails, or anything that will leave a mark. We also do not use aisle runners at Trinity.

## Unity Candles, Sand, etc

Our liturgy includes three symbols of the joining-together of your lives: the vows, the rings, and the joining of hands. Because these three are the focus of your wedding ceremony, we do not use unity candles, sand, or anything of that sort.

## Clean-up

The wedding party is responsible for all cleanup of decorations by the end of the day, which includes pew decorations and flower petals on the floor. And please don't use glitter!

## WHAT ABOUT THE CEREMONY ITSELF?

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Weddings at Trinity follow the order of worship in the service of Christian Marriage in the Book of Common Prayer. This order has these basic elements:

- Entrance of the Bridal Party and Bride
- The Charge – in which the officiating minister describes the reason we've gathered and the Christian understanding of marriage, and in which the couple and congregation confirm why they've come.
- Prayer, readings, and homily – After a short prayer, we hear one or more readings from Holy Scripture. The officiating minister then gives a homily on the readings.
- The Marriage itself – the three symbols of the marriage are exchanged: vows, the blessing and giving of rings, and the formal joining together of hands.
- Prayers over the couple and the Blessing – The congregation prays for God's blessing and bounty over the couple. The priest blesses the newly-married.
- Optionally, Holy Eucharist – If chosen, the couple makes Holy Communion their first act together.
- Departing procession – the couple and their attendants leave the church.

The wedding ceremony is a "solemn and public" service of worship of the church, and all music, decorations, flowers, articles of clothing, and other arrangements are to be appropriate to this setting. The same principles apply if the service itself is conducted away from Trinity, at a home, reception facility, or outdoor venue.

Bulletins will be made up and printed for the service. A draft will be sent to you three weeks before the wedding day.

## MUSIC

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Music for the ceremony will be decided upon in consultation with Marianne Chaudoir, the parish organist, with the clergy giving final approval. Because the service is a worship service, music selected should be considered sacred music. The organist can steer you towards dignified and classic wedding music from our tradition.

If you wish the congregation to sing hymns during the liturgy, they will be chosen from one of the hymnals of The Episcopal Church.

Our organist will be involved in the music for the liturgy even if you choose to have other musicians. Soloists and other instrumentalists should plan on rehearsing with the organist at a mutually agreed time before the day of the wedding and need to provide legal copies of their own music along with a copy for the organist. Our organist has the first right of refusal for all liturgies at Trinity. This means that she is entitled to her fee if she is available to play, unless she waives it.

## WHAT ABOUT PHOTOS AND VIDEO?

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Your wedding day is a memorable occasion! Trinity's clergy and staff are happy to work with your photographers and videographers to help preserve a good record of your wedding liturgy.

Here are a few guidelines to help everyone to work well together:

### Before the liturgy

Most photographers and videographers are professional and recognize that there is more to the wedding day than simply getting the best shot. As soon as you choose a photographer/videographer, or even before you have chosen one, please give us their contact information. Father Chris will be in touch with them to help them learn the space, the lighting, and the movement during the liturgy.

Sadly, there are a very few photographers and videographers who are not as cooperative as they should be. At any step along the way, it should be clear that Trinity's clergy and staff have the final say on anything that happens during the liturgy.

### During the liturgy

We consider the time of the liturgy to be when the guests start to be seated until the end of the postlude (the music at the end of the service). During this time

- The focus is on the worship of God, on you two as you exchange your vows, on the readers of the Holy Scripture, or on the priest as he preaches. It is important that the photographer is not disruptive to the liturgy.
- Photography is permitted without a flash.
- The Photographer will be able to move around the Nave (the main portion of the church where the pews are) and to the sides near the pulpit and lectern, but not directly behind the Altar.
- Tripods may be set up in the choir loft or off to the sides of the nave, but not inside the Altar Rail.
- Out of respect for God and the sanctity of the church's sacred space, and in order for your guests to participate fully in the worship service, the taking of photos by those attending will not be permitted during the liturgy itself.

### After the Liturgy

Photos of the wedding party and families may be taken in the church prior to and after the wedding. A stepladder is available if the photographer wishes to get elevated angles.

## THE WEDDING REHEARSAL

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The wedding rehearsal is usually held the evening prior to the wedding day. You should allow one hour for the rehearsal to take place. If you are planning a rehearsal dinner, it is advisable to schedule the rehearsal at least an hour and fifteen minutes in advance.

Present at the rehearsal should be all the members of the bridal party itself, any ushers, those doing the readings from Scripture, and the parents of the bride and groom.

## WHAT ABOUT THE RECEPTION?

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Two spaces are available for a reception, but neither of them is ideal.

The undercroft is on the lower level of the church building. Realistically, this holds fewer than 50 people. It is also where the Bride and her party typically prepare for the wedding day. The undercroft is a good possibility for small weddings, where there is a desire to have everything all in one place.

The dining room is on the top level of the parish hall, next door to the church at 311 Division Street. This is a very large space. There is a full kitchen attached to it, but it is up a flight of stairs and there is no elevator. Also, it is used two Saturdays a month for our community meal, which limits its availability.

The rector is pleased, if requested, to visit your reception to say a blessing at the beginning of a meal. If you would like the rector and his wife and/or other participating clergy to attend the reception as guests, please include them on your list of formal invitations.

## WHAT WILL OUR WEDDING COST?

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There are a number of fixed costs for your wedding, which depend in part on the options you choose.

The Organist's Fee is required both for members and for non-members. This fee includes a meeting with the couple to plan music, participation at the rehearsal and wedding service, and interaction with any other participating musicians. Our organist has the first right of refusal, which means that this fee will be paid even if you choose to use other musicians.

**\$200, Check is made to Marianne Chaudoir.**

The Sexton's Fee, \$100, is required for any wedding involving more than 50 people total (bridal party and guests), for any wedding in which flower petals will be dropped, and for any reception on church property. This fee includes extra custodial services before and after the service.

**\$100, Check is made to Peter Chmelik.**

The Bulletin fee is required for any wedding involving more than 50 people. This covers the cost of preparing and printing copies of the bulletin for your wedding.

**\$40, Check is made out to Trinity Episcopal Church**

A Deposit of \$400 is due at the time that the wedding is officially placed on the church calendar, or by the 2nd Pre-Marriage Conversation session, whichever comes first. This deposit is held as security for the Organist and Sexton fees and for any damage to the building; after the wedding has concluded, all fees are paid, and the building is cleaned up, the deposit is returned in full. This deposit is not collected if either the bride or the groom, or the parents of the bride or the groom are active members of Trinity.

### **\$400, Check is made out to Trinity Episcopal Church**

Costs related to flowers, decorations, extra musicians, photography, and the reception are of course left to the discretion and responsibility of the couple.

*In addition to these fixed fees, we encourage you to make an act of generosity and thanksgiving for the gift of your new life together. Consider tithing 10% of the total cost of your wedding to the church and/or to the charity of your choice. Any offering given to the church will be used for pastoral care and the alleviation of suffering.*

So this means that, for a wedding involving more than 50 people:

- the fixed costs will be \$340,
- the deposit will be \$400 (returned after the wedding if everything is clean and tidy, etc.)
- the suggested donation will be up to you, and can be anywhere from \$0 to more than 10% of the total cost of your wedding.

## APPENDIX: RESOURCES

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### The 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. [Canons of the Episcopal Church I.18.4]

### Contacts and Resources

<http://www.oshkosh-episcopal.org/holy-matrimony.html> – contains links to the text of the whole marriage service and all of the suggested scriptural readings

Organist: Marianne Chaudoir [mmchaudoir@att.net](mailto:mmchaudoir@att.net)

Office Manager: Kami Zuercher [office@oshkosh-episcopal.org](mailto:office@oshkosh-episcopal.org)

Priest: Father Chris Arnold [chris@oshkosh-episcopal.org](mailto:chris@oshkosh-episcopal.org) cell: 920-312-5099