

# Planning To Marry? Or Seeking to have your Civil Marriage Celebrated in the Church?

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Marriage is a wonderful occasion for all those involved. At Bishop Cronyn we take joy in supporting you in prayer as you prepare for the day, celebrating with you on the occasion and sharing our life with you as a newly married couple in the community. Whether your marriage takes place in the church, or in the Civil Authority, we seek to celebrate and rejoice with you.

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## WHO MAY MARRY?

At the moment, the Anglican Church of Canada has not yet given permission for clergy to officiate at the marriage of same-sex couples. However, a liturgy for celebrating your Civil Marriage in the context of the church is available. We pray for the day when the distinction between opposite and same-sex couples is no longer a reality in the life of our church.

Opposite-sex couples who have married in the Civil authority may also avail themselves of a liturgy which celebrates their marriage in the context of the church.

Since Christian marriage is a way of life, one or both of the parties should be an active member of the Church. If Church life has not been part of your background, we will be glad to introduce you to the Christian faith and the life of our community.

Couples may marry in the Anglican Church (at the moment only opposite-sex couples) if at least one of the parties to the marriage is baptized.

For those exchanging their marriage vows in the Church, and those coming to have their Civil Marriage vows celebrated, we are pleased to welcome your marriage in the context of the Christian Community. Throughout the preparation and celebration we will make every effort to assist in whatever way we can to make the event a joyful one.

It is important that the teaching of the Christian faith regarding marriage and the customs and traditions of the Anglican Church surround this event.

**Those who seek to celebrate their marriage within the community of faith, make witness to the fact that the Christian life is important to them and that they seek to live out their married life in the context of community. Couples should be (or be prepared to be) active in their local church community.**

### WHAT IF I AM DIVORCED?

A divorced person may marry again in the Anglican Church. In those cases where a divorce has taken place, at least one party to the marriage must be an active member of the Anglican Church and known to the pastor of the congregation where the wedding will take place. The process is a pastoral one, recognizing that mistakes have been made and seeking to provide a solid foundation for the new relationship out of what has been learned from the past. This pastoral process applies also to those coming to have their Civil Marriage celebrated by the community.

### MAKING APPLICATION TO MARRY.

The canon law of the Anglican Church requires that at least sixty (60) days notice be given to the pastor of the congregation that you intend to seek the sacrament of marriage. Most pastors prefer a longer period of time to allow for the necessary preparation programs and the documentation. At Bishop Cronyn the preferred length of time is six months to a year. In any event, **before you make any fixed arrangements**, consult with the pastor of the congregation to make sure that the date, time and place are available, and that there are no obstacles to the marriage.

Though there is no necessity for such notice to be given when a Civil Marriage is celebrated by the community, it is wise to allow for time to plan the event. Consult the pastor.

Marriages are performed under the authority of the State (i.e. Ontario Civil Law) which regulates the legality and validity of the marriage, whether officiated in the Church or in the Civil authority. These laws are binding and so, in the case of the marriage taking place in the Church, the pastor acts as an agent of the State. The pastor must also satisfy the laws of the Church. **Early consultation in such matters as relate to your marriage is important.**

### PREPARING FOR YOUR MARRIAGE or THE CELEBRATION OF YOUR CIVIL MARRIAGE.

Marriage preparation instruction is a requirement of the Canon on Marriage of the Anglican Church of Canada and the marriage rite itself for those who choose to marry in the Church, and is dispensed with only when the pastor has sufficient reason not to require it. In most circumstances, arrangements should be made to complete a

recognized marriage preparation program in sufficient time before the date that the marriage is to take place.

If you are coming to ask the church community to celebrate your Civil Marriage, preparation is of a different format, recognizing that the marriage has already taken place, it focuses on bringing your relationship into the fellowship of the church in a new way, rather than establishing that relationship.

In either case, meeting with the pastor and the musician to make **final** arrangements should take place at least one month before the event.

**Before making any arrangements which relate to the use of the church building, or the conduct of the ceremony,** consult with the pastor who has responsibility.

## THE LITURGY

The pastor of the congregation, (or someone assigned by him/her) is in charge of the liturgy for both marriages and the celebration of Civil Marriages by the church. The customs and traditions of the Church will always take precedence over “social” customs. There is a great deal of flexibility in the planning and conduct of the liturgy which needs to be worked out with the pastor well in advance.

Because the liturgy is in fact both a “solemn” and a joyous occasion, it should not be interrupted by flash cameras and flood lights. For this reason, the taking of photographs is restricted to cameras which do not require additional lighting. Flash cameras may be used as the couple enter and leave the church, and at the time of the signing of the registers. Photographs of the ceremony itself may be “posed” at the end of the service. When photographs are taken during the ceremony, people should not move about the space so as to draw attention to themselves and away from the ceremony. If video taping is done, it should be from a fixed position and set up before the liturgy begins.

Confetti is a constant problem for churches. It is hard to remove from rugs and often the colour from the paper stains other surfaces. If confetti is used it must be kept outside of the worship space. Environmental concerns encourage us to use grass seed, bird seed, or some other friendly substance as circumstances permit.

In the case of a Marriage in the Church, couples, and their witnesses should be reminded that being under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of a marriage can be grounds for invalidating the marriage. The pastor is charged with not allowing a marriage to proceed where the either of the couple, or any of the official witnesses are, or appear to be, under the influence of any substance that may impair their judgement.

Flowers are the responsibility of the couple. Arrangements should be made for flowers to be delivered to the church either at the time of the rehearsal or at a pre-arranged time in advance of the wedding. Consult with the altar guild about proportions for flower arrangements so that they fit the space appropriately.

Other decorations should be planned in consultation with the pastor or the person responsible for the care and maintenance of the building. Remember, simplicity is often the best thing.

The marriage canon of the Anglican Church of Canada states that; “Hymns or anthems sung at the service shall be those only which may be found in Holy Scripture, in the Books of Common Prayer (or Book of Alternative Services) or Common Praise, or in texts approved by ecclesiastical authority”.

In other words, if your music choice is not one that was originally written for use in worship check it out with the pastor to see if it is appropriate for the service. A lot of music that is very meaningful to the couple but not written for worship can be used, but it is best to make sure that it fits with the teaching and custom of the church.

You may use either the parish musician(s) or one of your own. However, because the music fee in the attached schedule of fees is used to support the music program of the parish and the musician makes his/her living from such fees, this fee is required even if you use a musician other than the one(s) provided by the church so that we do not deprive the church musician of his/her living.

To make an appointment to discuss your marriage or the celebration of your Civil Marriage with the pastor, please call or send email to one of places listed on the “Contact Us” page of this website.