

ABOUT THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE AT ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, BEAUFORT

Dear Friends in Christ,

Congratulations! You have committed yourselves to life together in the bond and covenant of marriage. The blessings that flow from it are among life's greatest joys: loving and faithful companionship, mutual support and encouragement-- and much more that you will gradually come to perceive as you live out your marriage.

It's important to understand the requirements of marriage in the Episcopal Church before you settle on St. Paul's as the place for your wedding. In the sacrament of holy matrimony, the couple establishes a covenant of lifelong fidelity to one another. They pray for God's blessing upon their union. Moreover, they promise to seek God's ongoing presence in the coming years to help them honor and keep their vows.

So ... marriage at St. Paul's is more than a wedding. On a day when a *wedding* takes place in church, the couple's sincere intention to nurture their *marriage* in church over all the days of their life together is just as important. Marriage is a demanding as well as a fulfilling vocation; active involvement in a community of faith is an indispensable avenue God uses to sustain couples in it.

If you are actively involved in a church (St. Paul's or some other) – wonderful if not, please consider prayerfully that God is calling you to precisely this in your married life. For this reason, St. Paul's has established the following guidelines....

WHO MAY BE MARRIED AT ST. PAUL'S CHURCH?

1. Active members of St. Paul's: parishioners who are faithful in attending worship (unless for good cause prevented) and who work, pray and give for the mission of Jesus Christ and St. Paul's Church.
2. Members of St. Paul's who are presently inactive, but willing to commit themselves to becoming active.
3. Children or grandchildren of members of St. Paul's who are active in a Christian church (any denomination).
4. Out-of-town Episcopalians who maintain a "dual" church membership: attending and supporting St. Paul's when here, as well as attending and supporting their primary parish in their community of permanent residence.
5. Out-of-town Episcopalians who are active in some other Episcopal parish. In evaluating and granting such requests, the Rector of St. Paul's may consider the schedule of events already on the parish calendar, the workload of the Altar Guild, and the like.

See Fee Schedule for use of building, counseling, ceremony performed by one of our priests. You are welcome to utilize you own parish priest or another Episcopal Priest with permission of St. Paul's Rector; in which case you can negotiate the counseling and priest stipend with them.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MARRIAGE IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH?

- At least one of the parties must be baptized.
- When either or both parties have been previously married, and that marriage has ended in divorce or annulment, the Bishop of the Diocese must be consulted and grant permission for the priest to perform the ceremony. Except in rare circumstances, the Bishop will authorize the remarriage only if a year has elapsed since the final divorce decree.
- A series of counseling sessions is required of the couple. Usually, the series consists of two to three meetings with the priest and depending on the circumstances two additional with a licensed marriage/family counselor for which the couple pays.
- The marriage must conform to the laws of the State and the canons of the Episcopal Church. **(No ceremony will be allowed to proceed without the marriage license. The couple should endeavor to bring the license to the church office at least three days prior to the wedding but in no case later than the required rehearsal date.)**

The next step is to contact the church office (252.728.3324) and arrange for an introductory meeting with the Rector or another priest on staff. No wedding date can be considered firm until that meeting takes place and the policies of St. Paul's about fees, music, decorations, photography etc. have been explained, understood and agreed to.