



GRACE  
CATHEDRAL

A HANDBOOK FOR THE CELEBRATION AND BLESSING OF A

# MARRIAGE

AT GRACE CATHEDRAL

Revised April 2008

We are delighted that you are considering or have made the decision to be married at Grace Cathedral. Your wedding is an important occasion in your lives and in the lives of those close to you. This handbook is intended as a guide:

- for those who have decided to be married at Grace Cathedral, as a tool to be used throughout the planning of your wedding,
- for those who have questions which may not have been answered by the basic wedding information sheet, and
- as an aid for clergy members outside the cathedral staff who are officiating or assisting at a wedding at Grace Cathedral.

The handbook repeats and expands upon the basic information provided in the initial information sheet. You should keep it as a reference guide throughout the planning of your wedding.

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## **WHO MAY BE MARRIED AT GRACE CATHEDRAL?**

The canon law of the Episcopal Church requires that at least one of the couple must be a baptized Christian. It is not necessary to be a member of the cathedral congregation, or to be an Episcopalian, to be married at Grace Cathedral. Nevertheless, a marriage in the cathedral is different from a ceremony that takes place in a home, a hotel, a judge's chamber or another location.

In the Christian church, marriage is a spiritual relationship in which human love is strengthened by the presence of God, who stands ready at all times to forgive, nourish, strengthen and ennoble human relationships. Without some consciousness of that presence, marriage is likely to be a strictly secular affair. Some people prefer such a relationship. The Episcopal church in no way minimizes or disparages marriages which have not begun in the church, nor does it disparage those with deep, sensitive and enriching human qualities for whom the Christian faith may not be a motivating or invigorating factor. Nevertheless, without some understanding of the spiritual nature of Christian marriage, the question arises, "Why do you want to be married at Grace Cathedral?" It is a beautiful place; one which provides a lovely "stage setting" for a wedding ceremony. For some, it has deep personal associations, which may go back to previous generations. Neither of these factors, alone, is a good reason for choosing to be married here. We hope and trust that couples seeking to be married here will be open to a discussion of the spiritual nature of their relationship and of the place of God in their marriage. If you are interested in exploring your own spiritual journey together further by becoming members of the cathedral's resident congregation, we will be happy to provide information on how to do so.

Divorced persons may be remarried in the Episcopal Church. You will be asked to provide a certified copy of your divorce decree(s). If you do not have a certified copy in your possession, you should request one from the county clerk or recorder in the county in which the divorce decree was issued and recorded.

## **THE BLESSING OF CIVIL MARRIAGES AND SAME-SEX UNIONS**

If you have already been married in a civil ceremony, you may have your marriage blessed in the church. The service is very similar to the marriage service, with some changes in wording. The ceremony may be very simple, or may involve all the elements of a wedding (flowers, music, bridal party), as you choose.

## **WHO MAY OFFICIATE?**

Clergy on the staff of the cathedral normally officiate at all weddings. Clergy are assigned to weddings according to their availability on the date in question. Other Episcopal clergy are welcome at the cathedral, and should request to officiate here by letter to the dean.

Clergy of other Christian churches as well as those of other faith traditions may assist the Episcopal clergy. Assisting clergy may deliver the charge, ask for the Declaration of Consent, read the Gospel, and perform other assisting functions at the Eucharist. If you have strong ties to another faith tradition, whether Christian or other, and wish to have other clergy as the sole officiant at your wedding, you should again carefully consider your reasons for wanting to be married at Grace Cathedral. In such a situation, it is normally better to explore having your wedding at the church or holy site of your preferred tradition.

## **SCHEDULING OF WEDDINGS**

By the time you read this booklet, you have probably already explored potential wedding dates with the wedding administrator. The canons of the Episcopal Church require at least 30 days advance notice of a wedding and the cathedral requires a minimum of 90 days to complete the pre-marital counseling process. In addition, the cathedral's calendar is often booked many months in advance.

Weddings are most often scheduled on Saturdays, although they may also be scheduled on weekdays (Monday through Friday) subject to the requirements of the cathedral calendar. Weddings are not scheduled on Sundays, during Holy Week (the week before Easter) or during most of the month of December. The times available for Saturday weddings are: 10 a.m., 12 p.m., 2 p.m., 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. Please call the cathedral wedding administrator for more information about specific dates and times.

## **LOCATIONS**

The cathedral has several small chapels and areas in addition to the main cathedral nave, and can accommodate everything from very small weddings to those with hundreds of guests. You may use any area you wish. Prices for the different locations do vary. Please consult the current fee list, which the wedding administrator will give you.

The following are guidelines on the seating capacity of the various locations.

The Chapel of the Nativity is the small open chapel to your right as you stand in the cathedral facing the High Altar. It has seating for 16 people and a few more chairs may be added. Maximum seating capacity is 20 people.

- The Chapel of Grace is the somewhat larger chapel to your left as you stand in the cathedral facing the High Altar. It is enclosed by a wrought-iron gate, which is generally closed except when services are in progress. There are 114 chairs inside the Chapel of Grace. Another 20-30 folding chairs may be set up outside the gates, bringing the maximum capacity of this area to 146 people.
- The Apse/Choir (Quire) is the area behind the High Altar. During regular cathedral services, this is where the ministers and choir sit. The fixed pews and chairs in this area will accommodate about 180 people, and additional folding chairs can be set up in the middle of the area for a maximum seating capacity of 210.
- The Nave is the large main area of the cathedral. The fixed pews seat approximately 600 people, and additional chairs may be added to bring the total capacity up as high as 1600. While the area is large and will accommodate a number of people, it may also be used comfortably for 150-200 guests by roping off some of the back pews and by seating fewer people in each pew.

Once your wedding is on the cathedral calendar, no other activities will be scheduled at the same time. If you later find that you will have more or fewer guests than originally anticipated, you can easily change to another location. The fees applicable to the new location will then apply.

Like all of the great ancient cathedrals, Grace Cathedral from time to time must undertake restoration and repair work. Interior scaffolding is sometimes needed to accomplish these repairs. We try to anticipate this work in advance and will be happy to give you our best guess during your planning process. However, we cannot always predict the location of scaffolding or other equipment many months in advance or when repairs become necessary on an emergency basis.

## **YOUR WEDDING REHEARSAL**

All but the smallest of weddings require a rehearsal, and we recommend a rehearsal in all cases. Being familiar with the space and with what is expected of them during the service will make all members of the wedding party more comfortable and helps to ensure a smooth ceremony.

You should discuss the timing of the rehearsal with the wedding administrator at your first appointment. Wedding rehearsals are scheduled as the cathedral calendar permits. While we try to accommodate the preferred date and time for a rehearsal, we cannot guarantee that your preference will be met. Rehearsals are usually scheduled during the day on Friday for Saturday weddings, but may be scheduled earlier in the week if you prefer. Other events on the cathedral calendar usually preclude a Friday evening rehearsal time.

All members of the wedding party should be present at the cathedral at least 10 minutes before the scheduled time for the rehearsal. Readers and ushers who are not serving as groomsmen should be included in the rehearsal. Visiting clergy are also expected to attend the rehearsal. Wedding consultants may attend the rehearsal as observers if they wish to do so; however, the consultant has no role during the rehearsal.

Please bring your marriage license with you to the rehearsal. This allows cathedral personnel to complete the necessary paperwork before you arrive for the wedding.

## **PRE-MARITAL INSTRUCTION**

Several sessions of pre-marital instruction are required of all couples. An initial meeting with the counseling clergy takes place first; he or she will then confirm your wedding date and discuss the schedule for further sessions. Normally there are at least three sessions of pre-marital counseling, plus a meeting at which you will plan the wedding service itself. The pre-marital counseling process uses a confidential, computer-tabulated inventory of questions relating to life, family and relationship issues. It is not a psychological test, but can serve to highlight and organize issues for the couple's discussion of areas of strength and growth in your relationship.

Counseling normally takes place during regular office hours, Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Couples who reside far from San Francisco may make arrangements for counseling in their home areas. The counseling clergy will confirm with the officiating cathedral staff member that the counseling has been completed.

## **THE ORDER OF SERVICE AND THE TEXTS**

Weddings at Grace Cathedral use the order for "The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage" found beginning on page 422 of the 1979 edition of *The Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church. The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible is the text used for scriptural readings. Both books are available in the cathedral Gift Shop. When you visit the cathedral, you may want to take the time to read the marriage service in *The Book of Common Prayer*, which is the red book found in the pews.

Please note that the rubrics of *The Book of Common Prayer* require that at least one reading come from the Bible. Up to one reading from outside the Bible may be used at the discretion of the officiating clergy.

Because a service leaflet helps the congregation participate fully in the liturgy, the cathedral staff will prepare one for you. Information that does not directly assist in the people's participation in the service is best produced by the couple, and made available at the reception or inserted into the leaflet.

We require at least three weeks time to prepare a service leaflet. You may, at your request, have the opportunity to view it before it is printed. The Wedding Administrator will provide you with sample service leaflets. All service leaflets must carry the instruction to wedding guests that "No photography, video or still, is permitted during the service."

Some couples may wish to include information about members of the wedding party on an insert to the leaflet. If you wish to do this, you are responsible for producing the insert. The Cathedral staff is happy to provide you with names of fonts and dimensions to assist you in the process.

## **MUSIC**

The guidelines for music for weddings follow those for the music in all cathedral services. The music of your wedding should reflect the holiness of this sacrament, in which you come to make your vows before God and the Church, seeking the grace and blessing of God to help you fulfill those vows. Secular music, including romantic or popular love songs, is not appropriate for the liturgy and is best reserved for the reception.

Only the cathedral's organists, or other musicians approved by the cathedral music department, may provide music for a cathedral wedding.

The organist will play a prelude of approximately 15 minutes before the service as your guests arrive and are seated. The wedding administrator will give you a CD of excerpts of organ music from which you may select processional and recessional music. Hymns sung by the congregation may be included in the service. The staff will help you select hymns from one of the approved hymnals of the Episcopal Church.

You may select one or two pieces of music for the bridal procession: Either one piece for the entrance of the bride's attendants (bridesmaids, flower girl, ring bearer, etc.) and another piece for the bride, or one piece for the entrance of the entire bridal party. Traditionally, the mothers of the groom and bride are the last people seated during the prelude. All other family members should be seated before they are, and then the mothers are seated, without reference to any particular piece of music.

Other instruments in addition to the organ may be used. Flute, harp, trumpet and string ensembles are among the most popular and most effective in the cathedral's acoustics. All musical repertoire beyond that on the organ CD must be approved by the Canon Director of Music in advance. Additional professional musicians may be engaged only through the cathedral music staff. Requests for specific outside musicians may be considered, but they must be auditioned and approved by the music staff. Depending on their availability, the men and/or boys of the Cathedral Choir may be employed for weddings. (The boys are available only during the academic year.) There is an additional charge for the services of the choir. Vocal soloists may also be engaged through the music department's list of approved soloists.

Outside musicians will require rehearsal time with the cathedral organist, and an additional rehearsal fee will apply.

Following the recessional music, the cathedral carillon (bells) may be played for approximately 10 minutes. Please indicate in advance to the wedding administrator if you would like this service, which carries an additional fee.

## **FLOWERS**

The wedding administrator will provide you with a list of approved florists whose work is known and who are familiar with the cathedral's spaces. Altar flowers must be ordered from one of these approved florists. You may obtain personal flowers (the bridal party's bouquets, corsages, boutonnieres, etc.) either from the approved florist who is providing the altar flowers, or from another florist of your own choosing.

If more than one couple are being married in the same space on the same day, we will be happy to provide you with contact information so that you may get in touch with the other couple to discuss sharing flowers. This can result in a significant saving for both couples and we encourage you to share flowers. If you do not agree on the choice of florist or flowers, you may each select your own flowers, but your florist may have a more limited time for delivery and/or arrangement.

Altar flowers are left at the altar as the couple's contribution to Sunday services. Flowers cannot be removed and transported to another site (for example, the reception) at the end of a wedding.

Pew end arrangements may be attached to the wooden pews in the nave and to the wooden chairs in the Chapel of Grace. Florists are asked to ensure that these arrangements are completely dry (not misted or with wet stems) before they are attached, to avoid damaging wood surfaces. For safety reasons, pew-end arrangements which include candles are not permitted under any circumstances.

Attendants may carry bouquets or baskets containing fixed flower arrangements. Because all flower petals stain the porous limestone floors of the cathedral, loose flower petals or other materials may not be strewn on the floor.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOTAPING**

Both photography and videotaping by professionals are permitted within specified guidelines. Because the wedding is first and foremost a worship service, no flash photographs are permitted during the wedding, either by the professional photographer or by wedding guests. Please ask your guests to refrain from any photography or videotaping. Any printed service leaflet must also include a statement to this effect.

Both still photographers and videographers must work with available light; no additional lights are permitted. All photographers and videographers must sign a permission form signifying that they understand the rules and agree to abide by them.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

- You must obtain a valid California marriage license in order to be married at the cathedral, or elsewhere. You do not need to be a California resident to marry in California, but you must have a valid California marriage license. Please consult your local county clerk's office for the requirements for obtaining the license, their hours of operation, etc. Licenses are valid for 90 days from the date of issuance. You should obtain the license well before the wedding day, as this will ease the burden of the tasks you must perform in the days immediately preceding your wedding date. Please bring the marriage license and all related materials with you to the wedding rehearsal.

- Because the cathedral is a public building, it remains open during the wedding ceremony. The cathedral vergers are on duty to ensure appropriate behavior on the part of tourists or other visitors, who will be restricted to areas where they will not interfere with the wedding. The building is closed for security only at the request of an appropriate government agency (the Secret Service or San Francisco Police Department.)
- There are candles at the altar in all locations, and they are lit for a wedding as they are for all services. No candles other than the cathedral candles are permitted. “Unity candles” are not provided and may not be used.
- Flower petals, rice, birdseed, confetti and other objects are not to be strewn anywhere inside or outside the cathedral. Flower petals stain the porous limestone and concrete floor surfaces; rice and birdseed pose a safety hazard to tourists and other guests, and all items present a cleaning problem for cathedral staff. Please do not distribute bubble-blowing kits to your guests, as the bubble mixture leaves a slippery and dangerous soap residue on the ground.
- Cloth or paper runners or other floor coverings are not permitted, as they are unsafe for both guests and the bridal party.
- Being part of a wedding party can be an exciting and rewarding experience for children who are mature enough to enjoy it. Please consider carefully the inclusion of very young children in your wedding party. The disruption of normal routine for young children can result in a highly stressful experience both for the children and for their parents.
- The wedding verger will give your ushers general instructions about how to seat guests during the rehearsal. Traditionally, the mother of the bride, if present, is the last person to be seated by the ushers. The mother of the groom, if present, is the next-to-the-last person to be seated by the ushers. The mothers and other honored family members are not a part of the bridal procession. No special music selection is needed for their seating. It is difficult to coordinate a very complicated seating list. It is much easier and more comfortable for all if family members are simply seated by the ushers as they appear, leaving only the mothers to be escorted in last.
- If you choose to employ a professional wedding planner or consultant, that person can be of considerable assistance to you in planning many of the details surrounding your celebration. The cathedral’s wedding administrator and the vergers are available to consult with your wedding planner about ways to provide smooth transitions from and to events before and after the wedding ceremony. However, the cathedral staff is responsible for all arrangements concerning the ceremony, the music, the seating, photography and videography, movement and placement of participants, commencement of the service, lighting, sound and flowers. The wedding planner is welcome to attend the rehearsal as an observer only. She or he has no role during the rehearsal or the wedding itself.
- Couples often wish to remember deceased relatives at their wedding. One way of doing this is to designate altar flowers as a gift in honor of the relatives. You may also wish to remember them in the Prayers of the People.

## **FEES**

Current fee information is included in the one-page information sheet that you have already received; detailed information on all costs will be provided by the wedding administrator upon request, or during your first meeting. A deposit is required in all cases to confirm and hold your date on the cathedral calendar. The deposit is transferable if you need to reschedule your wedding to another date; it is not refundable if you cancel.

You may use a credit card to pay the deposit and also to authorize payment of all remaining charges. If you pay by credit card, the balance due will be charged to your card approximately 4-6 weeks prior to the wedding date. If you prefer to pay by check, the remaining costs will be invoiced to you 4-6 weeks prior to the wedding date.

All fees must be paid when invoiced or processed to your credit card. No rehearsal will be held and no wedding ceremony will take place if the fees have not been paid. If payment is delayed until shortly before the wedding date, the cathedral may require payment by certified check or in cash.