



Marriage in the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa

Guidelines *February 2015*

Introduction

Marriage is a gift of God and a means of God's grace. It is a deeply personal relationship between two people, and yet exceedingly public in nature. It conforms to the sacramental expectations and canonical requirements of the Christian community, the Church, as well as to the laws of civil society. It effects new relationships within both the Christian and wider communities. Since it is celebrated and blessed within the life of the Church, it configures the couple in a new way to the life of the Christian community, and is a particular way of living out the baptismal covenant before God. And so, as the Book of Common Prayer rite of marriage states, it ". . . is not by any to be entered upon, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God." Or, as the Book of Alternative Services says more succinctly, "It is a way of life that all should reverence, and none should lightly undertake."

Within the Anglican Church of Canada, authority on liturgical and canonical issues around marriage belongs to the General Synod, Marriage Canon XXI. All clergy should be familiar with this Canon.

Purpose

The following guidelines are intended to assist clergy of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa who have responsibility for preparation and solemnization of marriages and for any who seek to be married within the Diocese.

At least sixty days notice is required from the time a couple asks a priest to solemnize their marriage (longer if it is a matter of remarriage). The marriage rites of the *Book of Common Prayer* and the *Book of Alternative Services* contain elements of both civil and canon law pertaining to both the legal and sacramental status of the married couple. Provision is also made for a couple married in a civil ceremony subsequently to come to the church for their marriage to be blessed.

Adherence to accepted liturgical expression is required. That is, the Book of Common Prayer or the Book of Alternative Services.

Clergy are not required to officiate or solemnization a marriage if either their conscience or schedule disallow.

Matrimonial Officer

The Bishop appoints a Diocesan Matrimonial Officer to function as a resource person for clergy around questions of marriage and is the liaison with the Chancellor of the Diocese when legal questions arise.

Episcopal Authority

All clergy in the Diocese of Ottawa including clergy serving in an appointment, clergy under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Ottawa and retired clergy, function under the Bishop's authority. If a couple requests their marriage be solemnized at a location outside the Diocese of Ottawa, the priest must obtain the permission of the Bishop of that diocese as well as the approval of the Bishop of Ottawa. Any priest from another diocese must likewise seek the permission of the Bishop of Ottawa to perform a marriage within his/her Diocese. Clergy from outside Ontario requiring a "one day license" to officiate at a wedding in the Diocese of Ottawa, will process this request through the Bishop's Office providing a minimum of six months notice and be able to provide a copy of their orders as priest and, affirmation that they are a priest in good standing in the diocese in which they are canonically resident. Generally speaking (according to the Province of Quebec), clergy holding Ontario licenses are not granted permission to perform marriages in Quebec, even if the location is within the Diocese.

Who is eligible to marry?

Anyone who is a communicant member of an Anglican parish or any person who is in full communion with the Anglican Church of Canada or anyone who is exploring a relationship with an Anglican community is eligible to be married according to the rites of the Anglican Church, subject to the following:

1. Persons seeking to be married in the Diocese of Ottawa must be eligible under the civil law of the relevant province and under the provisions of Canon XXI.
2. At least one of the parties to the solemnization of a marriage in the Anglican Church must be baptized. The case of a person or persons not baptized is dealt within Canon XXI.II.14. If neither has been baptized, the marriage cannot be solemnized.
3. Clergy are not to solemnize the marriage of any person who is in breach of the discipline of their own church, or who intends to breach that discipline by means of marrying in the Anglican Church. For example, divorced Roman

Catholics who intend to remain within that community may not marry in the Anglican Church as a way of avoiding the annulment procedures required by the Roman Catholic Church. Anglican-Roman Catholic marriages are governed by the Pastoral Guidelines for Interchurch Marriages (1987).

4. In the Diocese of Ottawa, marriage preparation is required of all couples. Only those who have received adequate preparation and, in good conscience can make the vows found in the marriage rite, are eligible to marry.

What form of marriage preparation is required?

As a beginning, the couple must meet with the priest whom they are asking to preside at their wedding to discuss their proposed marriage and matters surrounding the solemnizing of their marriage.

The marriage preparation program of the Diocese of Ottawa is the standard for such preparation. The priest should provide the couple with contact information for the diocesan program. Only in special cases should the priest provide preparation in place of the diocesan program. Couples may be directed to an authorized program of another church or faith tradition if arrangements are made to provide additional Anglican content.

The parties to the proposed marriage, after due consideration, shall be asked to sign the Declaration, contained in Appendix 1 of these Guidelines.

Licence or Banns

Regarding the publication of banns, marriages must conform to the laws of the province in which they are to be solemnized. In Ontario and Quebec, the posting of banns constitutes a legal license to marry. Please ensure that Banns are published in the manner required by the appropriate province. Upon request, banns may be read in the churches of both parties in addition to the obtaining of the license.

The publication of banns cannot be offered for the remarriage of divorced persons.

Where the marriage will be performed under a provincial marriage licence, the couple shall obtain the licence from the provincial authority and provide it to the priest prior to the day of the wedding.

Celebration of a Marriage in a Venue Other Than a Church Building

Normally, in the Anglican tradition, the celebration and blessing of Christian marriage is to take place inside the church building, visibly demonstrating that the marriage is a public ceremony and that the couple will be supported by the wider Christian family.

In 2004, Canon XXI was amended to provide for the solemnization of marriages outside of a church building. In the Diocese of Ottawa, marriage may be solemnized in a venue outside the church building providing the clergy are satisfied that “the solemnity and public nature of the occasion will be preserved and that the service will be conducted with dignity in godly and decent order.” (Canon XXI.II.12c) Other dioceses may have different norms. If the location is in what would generally be understood as within the bounds of another parish, the officiating priest shall first consult with the other parish’s incumbent.

Other aspects to be considered and discussed with the couple include the appropriateness of the venue; if the location is out of doors, provision is made for an alternate venue in the event of inclement weather; that there is no alcohol served prior to or during the wedding; that any expenses incurred by the clergy (including travel, meals, accommodation, supply ministry in the parish, if needed) be agreed upon prior to the event and duly compensated in addition to customary honoraria and donations to the church. All other requirements apply: including marriage preparation, a valid marriage licence, the use of authorized liturgies, appropriate hymns and readings and clergy appropriately vested.

Registration of the Marriage

The marriage is to be registered in the clergy person’s own parish register, in the parish register where the event is taking place or on the Diocese of Ottawa Marriage Register form for a Wedding in a Venue Outside the Church (available from the Bishop’s Office or online). The Diocese of Ottawa Marriage Register form is to be sent to the Diocesan Archives following the service.

Remarriage of Divorced Persons

The decision to proceed with the remarriage of divorced persons rests with the clergy. It is the expectation of the Bishop that clergy will exercise appropriate pastoral care and that compliance with civil and canon law is ensured. Clergy must view all final documents pertaining to all divorces (Decree Absolute or Certificate of Divorce) before it is used to apply for a marriage licence.

The Chancellor of the Diocese, through the Diocesan Matrimonial Officer, must be consulted if it is necessary to determine the validity of a marriage under Canon XXI.III and in the case of all non-Canadian divorces.

Please note that Canon XXI applies not only to those who have previously been married, but also to those who have cohabited in a common law or de facto marriage.

The Diocesan Matrimonial Officer is a coordinating and resource person and may be consulted in any case which is not straightforward. The Matrimonial Officer will forward all questions of validity and nullity of a previous marriage to the Diocesan Chancellor. The decision to proceed with the remarriage of divorced persons is to be made by the incumbent, the incumbent must consult the Matrimonial Officer in matters of the validity or nullity of said marriage and should consult that officer in any case of doubt.

Where either applicant has entered into two or more marriages that have been dissolved, the Matrimonial Officer must be informed (see Canon XXI.IV.29.b). Within one month of being notified by the incumbent, the Matrimonial Officer will contact the incumbent to confirm or reject the recommendation of the incumbent or to request further information. If the recommendation of the incumbent is rejected, the marriage may not proceed.

The Matrimonial Officer will keep annual statistical information regarding the number of second, third or more marriages that take place in the Diocese of Ottawa. This information will be submitted to the Bishop's Office.

APPENDIX 1

Anglican Diocese of Ottawa - Declaration

We, _____ and _____

hereby declare that we intend to enter into marriage which we acknowledge to be a union established by God's grace and in faithful love, to the exclusion of all others on either side, for better or worse, until we are separated by death.

We undertake to prepare ourselves for the exchange of vows at our wedding, recognizing that by this mutual exchange our union in marriage will be established.

We intend to strive thereafter to fulfill the purposes of marriage: the mutual fellowship, support, and comfort of one another, the procreation (if it may be) and the nurture of children, and the creation of a relationship in which sexuality may serve personal fulfillment in a community of faithful love.

We understand that this covenant of marriage will be made in the sight of God and in the presence of witnesses and of an authorized minister. We look to our faith and to our faith community for support throughout our marriage.

(Signature)

(Signature)

(Date)

Priest