

A Review of Guidelines for Clergy and Marriages in the Diocese of Rochester

The Episcopal Church's canons regarding the solemnization of marriage (I.18 & 19) are summarized here. The following conditions must be met in all cases:

- That both parties have the legal right to marry according to the state.
- That at least one of the parties has received Holy Baptism.
- That there be two witnesses who will sign the license and parish register.
- That both parties understand that Marriage is both a physical and a spiritual union and that it is entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent, and with the intention that it be lifelong.
- The couple has completed appropriate pre-marital counseling regarding the nature, meaning, and purposes of Marriage from the cleric performing the marriage or some other approved person.
- Any previous marriages and/or domestic partnerships have been dissolved legally and evidence of this has been provided to the clergyperson—who, in turn, provides it to the Bishop, who renders judgment as to the marital status of the party or parties.
- In the case of re-marriage, any former spouse(s) and children have been and are being treated justly.
- Thirty days' advance notice has been provided to the clergyperson. (The canons state this can be waived for a serious reason, which must be reported to the Bishop.)
- The Declaration of Intent must be signed in all cases and a copy kept on file in the parish office. The Bishop may ask to see this file on his or her Episcopal visitation.
- The Marriage must be recorded in the parish register.

The language in the *Declaration of Intention* in the case of a marriage involving two men or two women should be changed to read in part in Sec. 3(e), "...do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of two people..." In Sec. 3(f) it will read, "We believe that the union of two people in heart, ...and when it is God's will, for the raising of children and their nurture..."

All clergy, lay people, and seekers wishing to be married should remember that both the state and the Episcopal Church are very clear that it is within the discretion of every clergyperson to decline to do any wedding.

We urge all parishes, *regardless of their stance on the marriage of same-sex couples*, to update their websites with accurate, complete, and current information regarding their wedding policies, so that seekers may find and read it before making contact.

Rites available to Clergy

The bishop's office stands ready to assist you in recommending a proper rite to be used.