

**The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage**  
at Hickory Neck Episcopal Church  
*Revised 1 April 2008*

At Hickory Neck, we believe that The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage is a sacramental rite, primarily an act of worship for the God who gives us life and love.

Therefore, to be wed at Hickory Neck:

1. The marriage must conform to the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the canons of the church.
2. Marriages are not scheduled during the season of Lent or on New Year's Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.
3. One member of the couple must be a baptized Christian, and must be living out their faith covenant through regular worship and prayer.
4. At least one member of the couple must worship either at Hickory Neck Episcopal Church OR at the church of their choice, at least twice per month, from the time the wedding is scheduled until the wedding occurs. If the couple chooses to worship in another church, the clergy of that church need to provide confirmation of attendance.
5. The couple must initiate a series of pre-marital counseling, to begin no later than four (4) months prior to the date of the wedding, unless extreme circumstances (i.e., pending deportation or military deployment; imminent death of close family member) prevent it. These counseling sessions may be held with a member of the clergy at Hickory Neck, with a cleric from the church of the couple's choice, or with a professional counselor.
6. If counseled by clergy of Hickory Neck, the couple may be assigned homework assignments between sessions. If the homework is not completed in proper order by the date assigned, that session will be cancelled. If such work proves incomplete for two sessions, the wedding will be removed from the calendar permanently.
7. If pre-marital counseling sessions are to be held with Hickory Neck clergy, they will be scheduled roughly once per month, for one hour each, no later than 5pm on weekdays. Pre-marital counseling is not available on weekends.
8. If either member of the couple, or both, has been previously married and divorced, a photocopy of the ***final divorce decree is due one week after the wedding is scheduled.*** If the final divorce decree has not been received by that time, the wedding will be taken off the calendar.

9. ***At the time the wedding is scheduled, a deposit check of \$300 must be made to Hickory Neck Episcopal Church, with “Wedding” on the memo line.*** These funds will be held in escrow until after the wedding. The deposit is retained by the parish, unless the wedding begins on time, in which case, the deposit check will be returned to the couple or destroyed. If the wedding party is not prepared to begin at the announced time, the priest will initiate a Bible study for the congregation, to relieve the musician(s).
10. Clergy, under the provisions of canon law, are free to decline to conduct the marriage sacrament, at any time, for any reason, including non-compliance with any of the provisions stipulated here.
11. The clergy of Hickory Neck, or clergy of The Episcopal Church or the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, may preside at weddings held in the parish. Other ministers may assist, at the discretion of the Rector.
12. In order to qualify for member fees, one member of the couple must have been a member in good standing of Hickory Neck Episcopal Church for at least six months, or have a close relative (parent, grandparent, sibling, or child) who has been a member in good standing of Hickory Neck Episcopal Church for at least one year.

Membership in good standing is comprised of regularity at worship (minimum 6 times a year, unless prevented by illness or physical infirmity) and tangible contribution to the mission of the parish through ministry.

### **Music:**

1. Please contact our organist, Dr. H. Edwin Godshall, Jr. at 757-566-0276, in order to determine his availability and to consult on musical selections no later than thirty (30) days prior to the wedding. Dr. Godshall has the right of first refusal for any weddings held at Hickory neck. Other instrumentalists or vocalists may be used with the Rector’s permission and the organist’s discretion. The music played and words sung in Episcopal Church liturgies are limited to authorized pieces and texts. \
2. If Dr. Godshall is scheduled to play a wedding, a fee of \$250 will be due in the parish office no later than thirty (30) days prior to the wedding, or the wedding will be removed from the calendar.

### **Wedding Coordinators:**

While the assistance of wedding coordinators on matters of etiquette and aesthetics is appreciated during rehearsal, the Rector is the Master of Ceremony and final arbiter of all matters liturgical within the parish.

### **Dressing Room**

1. Rooms are available for the bride and her female attendants to dress at the church if desired. We ask the gentlemen in the wedding party to arrive dressed and ready.
2. If the bride and her female attendants dress at the church, the bride should arrange for two friends or relatives not in the wedding party to collect and remove all personal items. Including purses, from the dressing areas, as soon as the bridal party has finished dressing.

### **Receptions:**

1. Please refer to the Wilkinson Center Use Guidelines, available at the parish office, if you desire to use the church's facilities for a reception.
2. The priest who officiates a wedding will make every effort to attend the reception following. However, weekends are generally very busy times for clergy. Please do not wait for the priest to arrive at the reception to bless the food.

### **Candles, Flowers, Aisle Cloth, and Guest Registers:**

1. Please contact Barbara Laroche, 565-0122, to discuss flowers and other decorations.
2. Flowers may be placed in appropriate receptacles on the flower tables or platforms flanking and to the rear of the altar. These arrangements are considered offerings to God and should not be removed.
3. Flowers may not be placed on the credence platform to the right of the altar in the Historic Chapel. Flowers are also not allowed on or in front of the altar itself, the pulpit, or the altar rail.
4. Flowers may be placed on the doors, pew ends (if in Historic Chapel), and on the windows, if affixed in an appropriate manner and removed without residue after the conclusion of the liturgy.
5. Unity candles are not permitted.
6. For safety reasons, we do not allow an aisle cloth.
7. Guest registers are best used at the entrance to the reception area and actually provide a helpful delay while the wedding party and family complete photographs after the liturgy. A guest register may not be placed the entrance to the church, as this often causes the liturgy to begin past the announced hour.

### **Rehearsal:**

1. Rehearsals are for reviewing and practicing the wedding liturgy, so that all participants can be both comfortable and competent during the celebration of the sacrament itself. Most decisions on placement and seating need to be made prior to, not during, the rehearsal.
2. The rehearsal will be held the evening before the wedding. Rehearsals last one (1) hour or less, and begin when the bride and groom, the wedding party, ushers, readers, musicians, and others with assigned roles are present.

### **Photographs:**

1. One professional still photographer, with assistant if desired, may shoot anywhere on the grounds and in the building up to fifteen (15) minutes prior to the start of the liturgy, except for the chapel itself. Photographs in the chapel must be completed thirty (30) minutes prior to the start of the liturgy, in order to facilitate the seating of the guests.
2. The photographer may take a shot of the bride and her escort as she enters the chapel during the procession, as well as a shot of the newly married husband and wife as they exit.

3. No flash photography is allowed during the liturgy, and non-flash photography may only be taken by the designated professional during the liturgy.
4. One professional video photographer, with an assistant if desired, may set a single stationary camera on the back pew of the right side of the chapel.
5. Post-liturgy photographs should last no longer than twenty (20) to thirty (30) minutes.

### **Fees: Non-Members**

1. Organist \$250
2. Clergy \$250
3. Church rental \$300
4. Parish House rental if used for a reception \$75.