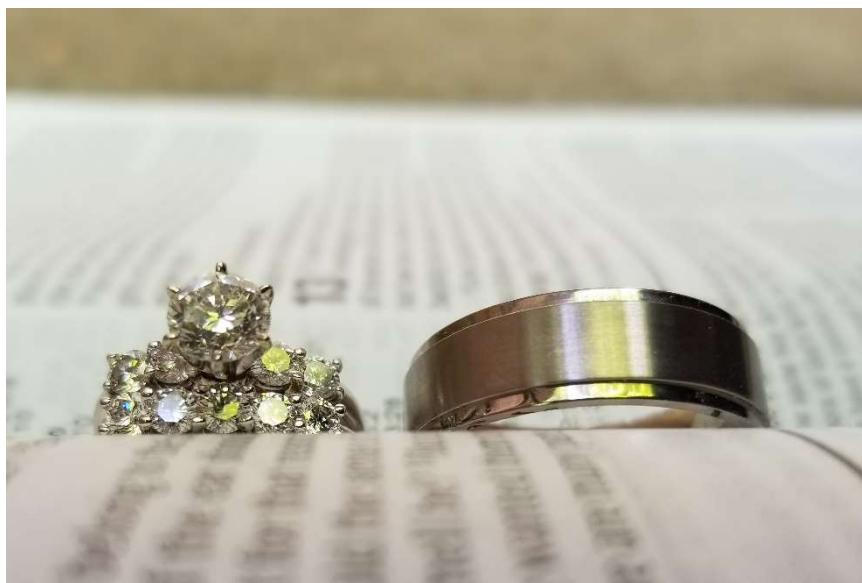




HOLY MATRIMONY



“Marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.”

INTRODUCTION

The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is a service of worship. The Book of Common Prayer titles the service “The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage”. The word celebration expresses the joy that characterizes the event and its *public* and *corporate* nature. The word blessing is a reminder of the solemn, religious context of this holy covenant. In the wedding service, the man and woman promise, in God's name, to be faithful to each other until their death. The congregation commits to support the couple and prays that God will strengthen and guide them in their life together. The minister proclaims God's blessing upon them. The sacred nature of the service, and the solemnity of the promises made by the couple, influences the decisions to be made about the wedding.

Christian marriage is also a covenant that is made out of the *mature* Christian commitment of the man and woman within the context of the whole Church. Thus, the service of Christian marriage assumes that at least the bride or groom is an active member of St. Alban's Church. This is why Christian marriage is inappropriate for couples who are not already active members of the church.

Many people find that *civil* marriage is a more accurate expression of their beliefs. A civil marriage may be blessed by the Church later whenever a couple intends to take on the *exceptional* obligations and responsibilities expected by the Church for Christian Marriage.

The following common questions should provide all of the information necessary to decide if the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony at St. Alban's Church is something you are ready to pursue.

COMMON QUESTIONS

What does the Anglican Church require?

Both of the parties to the marriage must be a baptized Christian, the couple commits to meet with the parish priest over a 60 day period for pre-marital counseling, and the couple signs the ACNA Marriage Declaration.

Do I need to be a member?

Yes. Marriages solemnized in the Church continue to be nurtured within the community of the Church as a lifelong process. Those who come to the Church seeking God's blessing on their relationship should do so with a clear intention of maintaining an active participation in the life of the Church. It is normative that marriage take place in the church where the couple already worships. Therefore, at least either the bride or the groom is expected to be an active member of St. Alban's Church as described in the *Duties of the Laity* (ACNA Canons: Title I, Canon X, Section II):

- I. To worship God, the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, every Lord's Day in a Church unless reasonably prevented;
- II. To engage regularly in the reading and study of Holy Scripture and the Doctrine of the Church as found in Article I of the Constitution of this Church;
- III. To observe their baptismal vows, to lead an upright and sober life, and not give scandal to the Church;
- IV. To present their children and those they have led to the Lord for baptism and confirmation;
- V. To give regular financial support to the Church, with the biblical tithe as the minimum standard of giving;
- VI. To practice forgiveness daily according to our Lord's teaching;
- VII. To receive worthily the Sacrament of Holy Communion as often as reasonable;
- VIII. To observe the feasts and fasts of the Church set forth in the Anglican formularies;
- IX. To continue his or her instruction in the Faith so as to remain an effective minister for the Lord Jesus Christ;
- X. To devote themselves to the ministry of Christ among those who do not know Him, utilizing the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives them, for the effective extension of Christ's Kingdom.

What if one/both persons are divorced?

In the case of marriage following divorce, the following additional requirements apply: (1) the minister has appropriate evidence that any previous marriage has been annulled or dissolved (copies of all divorce decrees constitute evidence of the termination of any previous marriages); (2) the divorce decree or annulment has been in effect for one full year prior to the date of the remarriage; (3) the minister consults with the parties as to continuing concern for the former spouse and children of the prior marriage; and (4) the minister has the consent of the Diocesan

Bishop (this takes at least 30 days). Because the request for the bishop's permission occurs after the pre-marital counseling period, the typical preparation time for marriage of a divorced person begins several months prior to the wedding date. The bishop expects a priest to meet with all couples for a series of pre-marital conferences. The priest may decline to officiate the service at his discretion.

How soon can the wedding be put on the calendar?

The date is subject to the schedule of the priest and the church. The date will be chosen after Part I of your pre-marital counseling with the priest has been completed. Weddings must be scheduled at least 60 days in advance.

Are there times when weddings cannot take place?

Weddings are generally celebrated on Saturdays. Because of the penitential nature of the seasons of Advent (the four Sundays before Christmas) and Lent (Ash Wednesday until Easter Sunday) weddings are not performed.

Who plans the service?

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage is a service of worship, and therefore is under the complete direction of the priest. The priest works with the bride and groom. All weddings at St. Alban's are according to the Prayer Book liturgy of The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage (page 423 of The Book of Common Prayer). The Eucharist, which is the sacrament of unity and exaltation, is normative. No additions or deletions to the liturgy are permitted.

Who comes to the service?

Weddings are important occasions in the lives of the bride and groom and their friends and families. However, since there are no "private services" in the Church, it is understood that the local congregation is also invited and that an announcement to that effect will be published. This should not be an issue particularly if the bride and groom are already members of the church and have vital relationships within the worshipping community.

What music may be played?

Only sacred music is allowed. You should contact the organist at least 30 days prior to the service. Any other arrangements need to be cleared with the priest and the organist. You are encouraged to use hymns for your wedding. The Hymnal 1982 is widely regarded as a masterpiece of sacred music. Quality instrumentalists can add a festive tone to the celebration of a marriage. Such instrumentalists are under the direction of the minister and the organist. Solo vocal music is unnecessary, but allowed as long as the music chosen is hymns or anthems which are appropriate to the liturgies authorized by the Church. The words are to be from Holy Scripture, from The Book of Common Prayer, or from texts congruent with them. Popular music should be saved for the reception.

What about flowers and other decorations?

Only altar flowers are used for the service. The bride and bridesmaids may have bouquets and the gentlemen may wear boutonnieres. Only fresh flowers and real greenery are used. Please make arrangements with the Altar Guild Director and the local florist. We recommend that the dominant color of arrangements be white. Only the church's altar candles and torches may be used during the marriage service. During the Easter season, the Paschal Candle is used at all services.

What about pictures?

A wedding is a service of worship. No photographs may be taken during the service (the processions in and out of the church are considered part of the service). This is a firm requirement and is expected to be communicated to the photographer and to friends and family. Posed photographs may be taken either before or after the service.

What about the reception?

If the reception is to be held at the church arrangements should be made in advance to reserve the necessary buildings. You are responsible for cleaning up and returning everything to its pre-reception condition. All rented equipment, etc., must be removed immediately after the reception. No alcoholic beverages of any kind are permitted on church property other than the Eucharist. The reception needs to end in time for the hall to be empty by 10:30 p.m.

Are there any fees?

There are no formal fees. Honorariums may be made:

- I. Priest Discretionary Fund: \$100 (payable to the church)
- II. Organist: \$100 (payable to the organist)
- III. Facility Maintenance: \$300.00 (payable to the church)
- IV. Altar Servers: \$25 each (payable directly to each server)

NEXT STEPS

1. If you still wish to proceed, contact the church office (209-826-2812).
2. The priest will then contact you to set up an appointment. If all agree to continue forward after that meeting you will schedule pre-marital counseling over a 60 day period with the priest.
3. The date for your wedding will be placed on St. Alban's calendar after Part I of the pre-marital counseling has been completed.
4. Lastly, but most importantly, pray to the Lord. Pray for yourself, for your betrothed, and for your marital preparation. The following prayers may be of some use:

Assist me (us) mercifully, O Lord, in these my (our) supplications and prayers regarding the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, and dispose the way of your servant(s) towards the attainment of your grace; that, among all the changes and chances of this mortal life, I (we) may ever be guided by your gracious and ready help; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty and eternal God, so draw my (our) heart(s) to you, so guide my (our) mind(s), so fill my (our) imagination(s), so control my (our) will(s), that I (we) may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated unto you; and then use me (us), I (we) beg you, as you would, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through my (our) Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Lord, make me (us) instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me (us) sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that I (we) may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that I (we) receive; it is in pardoning that I (we) am (are) pardoned; and it is in dying that I (we) am (are) born to eternal life. Amen.

OUR COMMITMENT

Who Are We?

Through Jesus Christ St. Alban's Church is building a community of believers to further the Kingdom of God in Los Banos, the Central Valley and the world. We embrace the practices and values of the ancient Christian Church, while making those practices and values accessible to today's culture. As members of Saint Alban's Anglican Church we share a common experience, a common interest, a common obedience, and a common goal.

A Common Experience: We all have experienced the love of God, through Jesus Christ, as forgiven sinners.

A Common Interest: We all desire to increase our knowledge of Jesus Christ as individuals and as a community of believers.

A Common Obedience: We all have recognized and confessed Jesus Christ as our master and lord above all others.

A Common Goal: We all are committed to bringing all people to the knowledge and love of God through Jesus Christ.

To This End: The *Mission* of Saint Alban's Church, following the command of Jesus Christ, is to make disciples of all people, baptizing them in the name of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to teach them the historic Christian faith until Jesus returns. The *Vision* of Saint Alban's Church is to be a community of Christian disciples that is known for: their faithful worship of God, generosity, and hospitality.

