

## BEING MARRIED AT CALVARY

People planning to marry find themselves in at least three different places with regard to the Christian Church:

1. Some people have found that being actively engaged with a community of faithful Christians gives shape and meaning to their lives. Without the Church, its fellowship and worship life, it would be hard for them to be the people they believe they are called to be. They have made a commitment, as our *Book of Common Prayer* puts it, “to work, pray, and give for the spread of the Kingdom of God.”
2. Some people have a personal relationship with God that they find needs no support from an institution like the Church. This does not mean, however, that they do not want God’s help and blessing for their marriage. Many young Americans would put themselves in this category.
3. Some people are not sure. Maybe they do want and need to be part of a community of people who come together to seek God’s will for their lives--and maybe not. It may be that they may have been getting along without much visible connection to the Church for some time. Getting married, however, raises all sorts of questions about the kind of life they want. Sometimes, one or both members of the couple will have a sense that maybe a relationship with Christ and his Church should be part of this.

At Calvary Church, as in most Episcopal parishes, we believe the Church is involved with weddings because people in category #1 want to make their marriage commitment within the community that already gives shape and meaning to their lives. The Church invests its time, love, and facilities to support couples in living out the challenging covenant of marriage--both now and in the years ahead.

If you find yourselves in category #3, we are interested in working with you to explore both your marriage commitment and the meaning of Christian community. To do this, your wedding date needs to be far enough in the future that you can share actively in our worship and the life of the parish for at least six months before the wedding. When your wedding day comes, you will feel fully at home in this place where you will be married and among these people who want to support you. You may decide to commit to an ongoing relationship with this parish, its people, and its Lord.

If you find yourselves in category #2, believing that your relationship with God is a private matter that for the most part needs no institutional or communal expression, try to be consistent as you plan your wedding. Consider having your ceremony in the place where you will hold the reception. There are clergy and marriage commissioners in the community who will do their best to give your wedding a spiritual dimension. There may also be churches that would be willing to make their sanctuary available for your service.

There may be a category #4. If the two of you find yourselves in radically different places with regard to religious faith, you have a serious challenge ahead. If the one of you who is least inclined to feel the need of a relationship with the visible Church honestly believes he or she can support their partner in working out a church relationship, we are happy to work with you.

Here are some other questions we are frequently asked:

**What about people who do not live in the area?** People who live out of town but wish to be married in Memphis for some reason can be married at Calvary if our schedule permits and if one or both of the couple are active communicants of an Episcopal parish where they live. Our expectation is that they will receive pre-marital counseling through their home parish.

**What about the children of parishioners?** Children of active, communicant members of the parish, who still live in the Memphis community, are expected to be active members of this--or some other--local church OR to share actively in our worship and parish life for six months or more before the wedding. Children who live outside the local area are expected to have--or to establish--a church relationship in the place where they live during the period before the wedding and to receive pre-marital counseling through that church.

**What about people who have been previously married?** Divorced persons may apply to the Bishop for permission to be married in the Episcopal Church. The member of the clergy who is doing your pre-marriage counseling will talk with you in depth about your previous marriage or marriages in order prepare the application. For the Bishop to consent, he must believe that both parties intend a lifelong union and have the emotional and practical resources to carry it out.

**We are Roman Catholic (or some other denomination) and we do not want to go through our church's marriage or re-marriage procedures. Can you help us?** We believe strongly that couples should follow the disciplines of their own denomination, so we do not hold weddings for Catholics or others who want to avoid dealing with their own church's expectations. People who are ready to explore joining the Episcopal Church, however, are welcome to do so.

**Would one of the Calvary clergy hold a wedding for us off-premises?** It is rare for our clergy to officiate at a wedding outside the church building. However, if one of the Calvary clergy agreed to do this, the expectations of the bride and groom would be the same as for weddings in the church. We are happy to be invited to take part in weddings held at another church, whether Episcopal or of another denomination.

One of our clergy will be happy to talk with any new couple about their hopes and plans for their wedding and their life together. Call 525-6602 for an appointment.