

# Marriage

**M**arriage enhances life together, provides deep joy, and offers life-sustaining strength in the relationship between husband and wife.

## **What is marriage?**

In marriage people give and find respect, comfort, help, delight, and tenderness. They may have children. Marriage means commitment and care in good times and in bad. Each is linked to the family of the other. Marriage is a gift of God.

## **What are the requirements for marriage?**

The province of British Columbia requires a license to marry, which is valid for three months. Each party to the marriage must be 19 years of age or have both parents sign a consent form at the time of licensing. Neither partner may be currently married, or too closely related to the other. To be married in the Anglican Church of Canada, at least one of the couple must have been baptized in a Christian church (not necessarily Anglican).

## **What marriage preparation is required?**

All couples married by the Church undergo marriage preparation. Often this is by attending an approved course. In some cases the priest who will perform the marriage will prepare the couple. It is important to examine issues such as communication, how you will handle money,

and whether or not you will have children. Any successful long-term relationship takes work. You will have the opportunity not only to talk about things that might challenge your marriage, but also to identify and celebrate what will make your relationship strong.

## **Do the couple have to be members of the Anglican Church?**

Membership in the Anglican Church of Canada is not required by church bylaws (canons). You are certainly invited to join if you are not a member.

## **What if one or both are divorced?**

Although the church views marriage as a lifelong commitment, it recognizes that sometimes marriages cease and relationships break down. The church offers support to persons seeking remarriage after divorce. The priest will help you evaluate what went astray in the earlier marriage, and what you have learned about yourself from the breakdown. Through this process, the church will do all it can to ensure that the new relationship will be life-giving.

## **Must an Anglican marriage take place in a church building?**

Couples are strongly urged to marry in church. Marriages in other places are

occasionally allowed, but in this region of the Anglican Church of Canada, the bishop must give permission each time a priest conducts a marriage outside a church. Anglican marriage is a public ceremony. The bishop insists that marriage ceremonies occur in a public place –not, for example, in a private home or garden –and be dignified. (No bungee-jumping).

## **What is the marriage service?**

The service includes a statement of Christian marriage, readings from scripture, and sometimes a sermon. Family members may take part in the service by reading scripture or leading prayers. Then come the vows made to each other, and prayers. The couple signs church and civil marriage registers, as do two witnesses, and the priest. The service may conclude with Holy Communion, or simply with a blessing.

## **Must there be a Holy Communion service?**

The marriage service is a joyous time of thanksgiving. Holy Communion (often called the Eucharist) acknowledges that the source of love in this marriage is God. This is especially meaningful when many of the guests are Christian. However Holy Communion is not always required – discuss this with the priest performing the marriage.

**Is there a fee for a marriage service?**

Normally there are fees for marriage. These vary by parish, and can be adjusted if there is need. Check with the church office.

**How do we go about arranging a marriage?**

The first step in moving toward marriage is to contact the church office for an interview with a priest. It is best to arrange this meeting at least three months in advance of the desired date of the marriage service.

**Does the Anglican Church of Canada marry gay or lesbian couples?**

No, it does not. However, in some parishes in the Greater Vancouver region of the church, a blessing of committed same-sex relationships is offered. There is a separate brochure with information on this topic.

**How does the church support marriage following the marriage ceremony?**

The church is a caring community in which both the joys and struggles of life are shared and celebrated. The weekly Sunday service offers focus for your lives, connection with people with common values, a time for families to be together, and a source of spiritual strengthening and renewal. Many churches offer marriage enrichment weekends for couples who have been married for several years.

More information is available on the diocesan website, [www.vancouver.anglican.ca](http://www.vancouver.anglican.ca)



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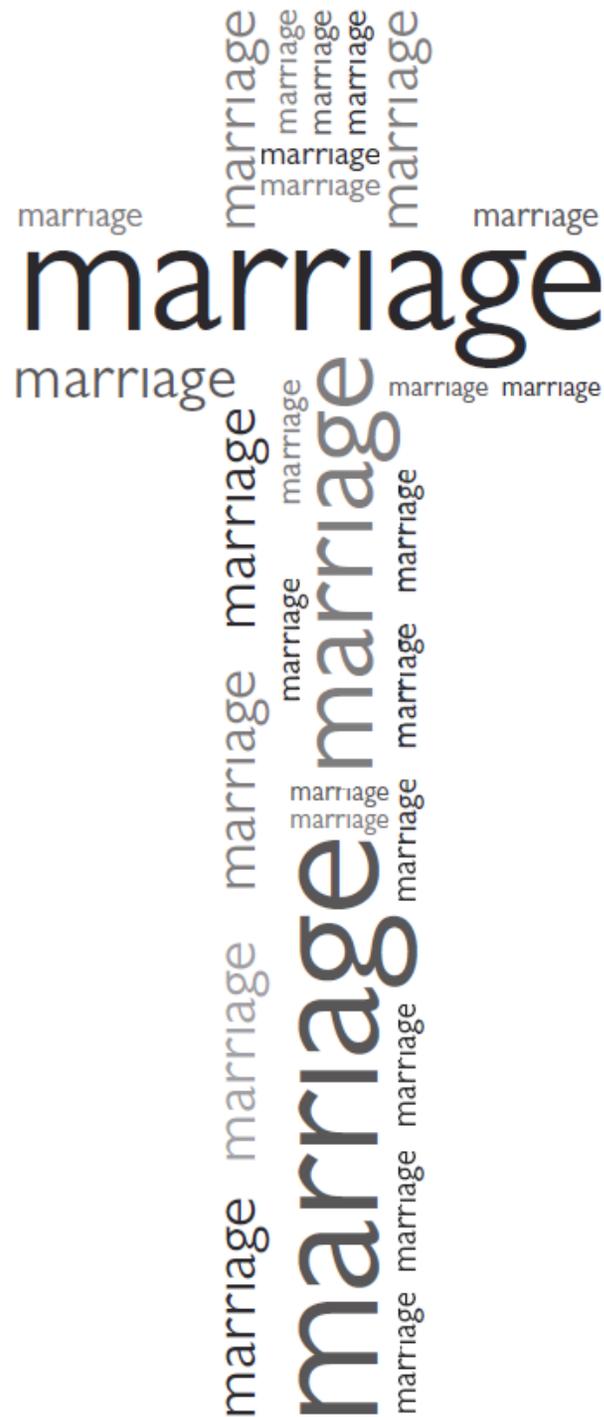
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