



Grace Episcopal Church
150 Chapel Street
Norwood, MA 02062

Guidelines and Requirements for Remarriage in the Episcopal Church and at Grace Episcopal Church

By both tradition and practice the Episcopal Church regards the solemnization of marriage as a sacred covenant between two persons in the presence of God and witnessed by the community of faith. We believe marriage to be a life-long covenant. We also understand that, due to human failings, sometimes marriages end. We feel that divorced persons should be honored and cared for as children of God. However, remarriage is a serious matter requiring both careful discernment and pastoral care. Therefore, the following are required of persons seeking remarriage at Grace Episcopal Church:

While recognizing that each situation is unique and deserving of care and concern, the bishop has stated that he will not grant permission to request remarriage from members of other denominations when that request is clearly a means of avoiding the discipline and doctrine of another church. The bishop requires that people who are being married in the Episcopal Church have, or intend to have, an ongoing relationship with the parish in which they are married or another parish.

An application for remarriage must be submitted to the diocesan office (617-482-5800) AT LEAST 60 days before the wedding date. The Canons (laws) of the church require that a priest receive permission from the diocesan bishop before solemnizing the remarriage of a divorced person. Persons seeking remarriage should keep in mind that permission is sometimes denied by the bishop, and the clergy of Grace Church have no control over the bishop's final decision. Therefore, many couples chose to wait until the bishop's permission is received before sending out invitations, booking a reception, and so on. The bishop's permission can be sought and granted many months in advance so that wedding plans can proceed without worry.

The application for remarriage must include:

1. A signed Declaration of Intent (on the back of the application). The Declaration of Intent declares that the couple understands marriage to be a life-long union.
2. A copy of the Divorce Absolute (not Divorce Nisi or Divorce settlement) for each party divorced. Please do not give us your original.
3. A letter from each person (even if only one is divorced) which should include:
 - a. Reasons for the dissolution of the former marriage
 - b. Length of separation prior to divorce proceeding.
 - c. Provisions that have been made for the emotional and financial support of children from the former marriage.
 - e. Nature of the relationship the intended spouse has established with the children of the former marriage.
 - f. Hopes and expectations of the intended relationship; understanding of Christian marriage, and reasons for wishing to have the marriage solemnized by a clergyperson of the Episcopal Church.

If only one member of the couple is divorced, the person for whom is this a first marriage is asked to respond only to questions (e) and (f).

Professional Counseling. The bishop requires that a person seeking a third marriage must participate in at least six sessions of counseling by a therapist approved by the bishop. Grace Church requires that a person seeking a first or second marriage must participate in at least four sessions of counseling with a therapist. The clergy of Grace Church can make referrals to therapist known to be qualified. This counseling is at the expense of the couple seeking remarriage. The content of the counseling sessions are confidential and do not need to be shared with the clergy, bishop, or anyone else. All that is required is a letter from the therapist stating that the required number of sessions have taken place.

Meeting with the Clergy. The bishop requires a letter from the clergyperson who will solemnize the marriage, stating why s/he believes the couple should marry. This letter can only be written with honesty and integrity if the clergyperson and couple have gotten to know each other well. Therefore, couples are asked to meet at least twice, if not more, with the clergyperson, to share their journey toward marriage and their hopes for the future, and to explore the spiritual dimensions of marriage. At these meetings plans for the ceremony can also be discussed.

Although these requirements may seem arduous, they are not nearly as arduous as marriage is. We believe it is well worth investing some time and effort in establishing a firm foundation for a long and joyful life together.