

# THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF ARIZONA

## Policies and Procedures

### **MARRIAGE AND REMARRIAGE**

The Prayer Book gives only the requirement that one of the parties be a baptized Christian (p. 422). Title I, Canons 18 and 19 of The Episcopal Church contain additional requirements. Apart from that, I know that there is a great deal of variation among rectors. Some require that the person be a member of the parish, others see a request from a non-member to be an opportunity for evangelism. Either approach has advantages and disadvantages, but whatever your local policy, I would request that you provide serious pre-marriage counseling to couples who come to you.

In the case of remarriage, I would ask

a) that you continue the policy of requesting in writing permission from the bishop's office at least 60 days before the date of the wedding;  
b) in your request, please state the extent of your relationship with the couple and what counseling you have provided and your judgment that issues in the first marriage have been adequately dealt with, including the care of any children;

c) that you have seen a copy of the divorce decree(s);

d) that in the case in which one of the parties has been divorced more than once, there has been a period of professional counseling

e) that at least one year has passed since the previous marriage(s) ended.

f) that you remember the church building is the proper venue for weddings. My sense is that those who don't want to be married in a church aren't particularly serious about either their own faith or the spiritual meaning of the wedding service. I often hear such excuses as "we don't want to offend anyone who comes to our wedding by having it in church," or "We don't want to do anything too religious." In that case why bother? If the venue is set because it is spiritually neutral or it is more convenient for the caterers, then what is the point? I would urge our clergy, except in extra-ordinary circumstances, to insist that couples be married in church. For my part, I will no longer authorize re-marriages scheduled for backyards, country clubs, or cruise-ships.

Once the request for permission has been received, we will send you a letter giving permission for the marriage to take place. Once the ceremony has taken place, please complete the bottom section of the letter and return the entire letter to the Diocesan Office.

*Please note that all weddings you perform need to be entered in your parish register, even if they are weddings of non-members, or if they take place outside of the church building (a practice I would discourage). A report of a wedding between divorced persons must be provided to me by way of the completed letter of permission.*