



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO

TO: Clergy of the Diocese
FROM: The Bishop's Office
RE: Marriage Guidelines for the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego

Dear Clergy,

I am writing to update the Guidelines for Marriage in the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego. As you know, The Episcopal Church has special rules for clergy who wish to officiate at the marriage of two people if either has been previously divorced. In addition, the General Convention of 2018 authorized two liturgical rites for trial use, which can be used for same-sex or opposite-sex marriages. The guidelines below discuss these rites and make brief comments about officiating at same-sex marriages.

General Rules for Marriage

Every clergy person performing a marriage shall conform to the rules of The Episcopal Church found in Title I, Canons I.18 and I.19. These canons include requirements that:

- The marriage occurs in accordance with the laws of the state in which the marriage is performed.
- The marriage is performed according to one of the authorized rites of this church. Further discussion of these rites can be found below. I will not grant permission to clergy to use rites other than those authorized by this church.
- At least one of the parties is baptized.
- The member of the clergy officiating at the marriage shall ensure that the parties have been counseled and instructed as to the rights, duties, and responsibilities of Christian marriage.
- Both parties shall sign the Declaration of Intention found in Title I, Canon 1.18.4.

Please note that it is my expectation that marriages will ordinarily be officiated by priests or bishops. I would not normally permit a deacon to officiate at a marriage. I might make limited exceptions to this rule in special circumstances. I request that any deacon who

wishes to perform a marriage ceremony contact me for permission and explain the special circumstances.

Authorized Marriage Rites

Any clergy person officiating at a marriage ceremony should use one of the authorized rites of this church. Those rites are:

- The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage – Book of Common Prayer, page 423.
- An Order for Marriage – Book of Common Prayer, page 435.
- The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage 2 – authorized for trial use by General Convention in 2018. This rite is analogous to the rite in the Book of Common Prayer, but removes gendered language so it can be used by same-sex couples. Find the approved form here: <https://edsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Celebration-and-Blessing-of-a-Marriage-2.docx>. Access this on our website as well: <https://edsd.org/weddings>.
- An Order for Marriage 2 – authorized for trial use by General Convention in 2018. This rite is analogous to the Order for Marriage in the Book of Common Prayer, but removes gendered language so it can be used by same-sex couples. Find the approved form here: <https://edsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/An-Order-for-Marriage-2.docx>. Access this on our website as well: <https://edsd.org/weddings>.
- The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage – authorized for trial use by General Convention in 2018. Find the approved form here: <https://edsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Witnessing-and-Blessing-of-Marriage.docx>. Access this on our website as well: <https://edsd.org/weddings>.

Please note that I encourage use of The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage from the Book of Common Prayer, or its cognate rite, The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage 2. The other rites are permitted also. I do not recommend that you make one rite available for opposite-sex couples (e.g., the Book of Common Prayer rite), while expecting same-sex couples to use a very different form (e.g., The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage). Both opposite-sex and same-sex couples should have access to similar rites.

Other Considerations for Same-Sex Marriage

There are no special additional requirements for performing same-sex marriages. If your congregation is preparing to perform its first same-sex marriage, you may wish to do some pastoral work with the congregation to help prepare them for the ceremony. I would be happy to have a conversation with you about your congregation's situation, at your discretion.

Guidelines for Remarriage after Divorce

Canon 1.19 requires that you receive a godly judgment from your bishop in order to perform a marriage for someone who has been previously divorced. Attached you will find the form to use for remarriage requests. Please note that these guidelines should be followed whenever someone has been divorced and seeks remarriage. In addition, if a member of a couple has previously been part of a civil union, a domestic partnership, or a relationship blessed by a church even if not recognized by law, I expect the same guidelines to be followed. For simplicity, all these situations are referred to in the guidelines below using the term “divorce.”

Guidelines for Marriage After One Divorce

1. In all cases where one or both of the persons seeking marriage have been divorced, I ask that you use the enclosed request application form: “Celebration and Blessing of Marriage.” The petitioning clergy person should include a letter with the request outlining the special circumstances of the remarriage and indicating that all the conditions required in these guidelines have been addressed.
2. The priest making the application should have an ongoing pastoral relationship with one or both of the persons seeking remarriage. Preferably they should be participating and supporting members of the congregation, or have the intention to become full members.
3. Regarding the previous marriage(s), the following concerns should be addressed:
 - a. The issues that ended the marriage have been addressed, and sufficient time has passed to grieve the previous marriage(s). Generally, this would be one year from the date of the filing for petition of divorce, or six months after the date of the final divorce or annulment decree.
 - b. Obligations to the former spouse and/or children have been or are being fulfilled responsibly.
 - c. The new partner was not in any way party to or responsible for the breakup of the previous marriage.
 - d. The person seeking a second marriage must demonstrate that he/she brings strength and insight into this new relationship, and has a strong spiritual understanding of the sacrament of marriage.
4. The clergy person must see certified copies of final divorce or annulment decrees and retain copies for the congregation’s files.
5. Both parties must sign the Declaration of Intention required by Title I, Canon 18, Sec. 4, and a copy should accompany the request form.

6. The priest applicant must be canonically or resident or licensed in the Diocese of San Diego. Any judgment given by the bishop of another diocese must be submitted to me for my reaffirmation. Clergy not canonically resident or licensed in this diocese should contact me for permission to officiate at marriages here.
7. A date for the proposed marriage should not be formally set until permission has been obtained. My response to requests to solemnize such marriages will be made within three weeks.
8. When consent is given, a response form will accompany the approval of the request. This form must be returned to me after the marriage is solemnized, indicating the date and place that the service was held.

Guidelines for Remarriage After Two or More Divorces

If one or both parties seeking marriage have previously been divorced two or more times, I ask you to fulfill the following additional requirements to seek a godly judgment:

1. Please contact me directly so that we can discuss the circumstances of the remarriage request.
2. I ask that you send the couple to a licensed professional counselor for additional counseling that will ensure that they are well prepared for the commitments of marriage. I request that you ask for a letter from the counselor stating his/her opinion that the couple have appropriately grieved and learned from the previous marriage, and are prepared to enter a Christian marriage, with all the commitments Christian marriage entails. You should retain a copy of the counselor's letter for the congregation's files.

I am happy to discuss any of these requirements with you over the phone or by email. Thank you for all that you do to assist in building holy relationships.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan Brown Snook" followed by a small cross symbol.

The Rt. Rev. Susan Brown Snook
Bishop