

**Episcopal Diocese of Iowa**  
**Update to Diocesan Marriage Guidelines Issued by Bishop Alan Scarfe**  
Advent 2015

**As of Advent 1 2015, all marriages are under the revised marriage Canons from 2015 General Convention (*below*). There are several new liturgical rites for marriage available on trial use, and these will be linked on the diocesan website. They are available for use this triennium along with the Prayer Book marriage rites. These rites and the direction of the new Canons replace my updated guidelines from October 2014. The right of any clergy person to refuse to marry a couple is upheld in the canons, though if this is for conscience reasons related to the couple's sexual orientation, the clergy are expected to provide an alternative opportunity for the couple to be married within the Church.**

*Canon 18: Of the Celebration and Blessing of Marriage (as amended by GC2015)*

Sec. 1. Every Member of the Clergy of this Church shall conform to the laws of the State governing the creation of the civil status of marriage, and also these canons concerning the solemnization of marriage. Members of the Clergy may solemnize a marriage using any of the liturgical forms authorized by this Church.

Sec. 2. The couple shall notify the Member of the Clergy of their intent to marry at least thirty days prior to the solemnization; Provided, that if one of the parties is a member of the Congregation of the Member of the Clergy, or both parties can furnish satisfactory evidence of the need for shortening the time, this requirement can be waived for weighty cause; in which case the Member of the Clergy shall immediately report this action in writing to the Bishop.

Sec. 3. Prior to the solemnization, the Member of the Clergy shall determine:

(a) that both parties have the right to marry according to the laws of the State and consent to do so freely, without fraud, coercion, mistake as to the identity of either, or mental reservation; and

(b) that at least one of the parties is baptized; and

(c) that both parties have been instructed by the Member of the Clergy, or a person known by the Member of the Clergy to be competent and responsible, in the nature, purpose, and meaning, as well as the rights, duties and responsibilities of marriage.

Sec. 4. Prior to the solemnization, the parties shall sign the following Declaration of Intention:

We understand the teaching of the church that God's purpose for our marriage is for our mutual joy, for the help and comfort we will give to each other in prosperity and adversity, and, when it is God's will, for the gift and heritage of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of God. We also understand that our marriage is to be unconditional, mutual, exclusive, faithful, and lifelong; and we engage to make the utmost effort to accept these gifts and fulfill these duties, with the help of God and the support of our community.

Sec. 5. At least two witnesses shall be present at the solemnization, and together with the Member of the Clergy and the parties, sign the record of the solemnization in the proper register; which record shall include the date and place of the solemnization, the names of the witnesses, the parties and their parents, the age of the parties, Church status, and residence(s).

Sec. 6. A bishop or priest may pronounce a blessing upon a civil marriage using any of the liturgical forms authorized by this Church.

Sec. 7. It shall be within the discretion of any Member of the Clergy of this Church to decline to solemnize or bless any marriage.

*Resolved that this canon shall become effective on the First Sunday of Advent, 2015.*

### **Statement of Clarification from the House of Bishops Regarding Marriage and Blessing Liturgies in The Episcopal Church**

July 1, 2015

The 78<sup>th</sup> General Convention (2015) authorized three liturgies for use **beginning Advent I 2015**.

1. *“The Witnessing and Blessing of a life-long Covenant,”* authorized for use under the direction and with the permission of the bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority. This liturgy is only intended for use with same-sex couples in jurisdictions where same-sex marriage is not legal.
2. *“The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage,”* authorized for trial use (per Article X of the Constitution and Canon II.3.6.) under the direction and with the permission of the Diocesan Bishop. This liturgy is intended for use by **all couples** asking to be married in this church.
3. *“The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage 2,”* authorized for trial use (per Article X of the Constitution and Canon II.3.6.) under the direction and with the permission of the Diocesan Bishop. This liturgy is intended for use by **all couples** asking to be married in this church.

In addition, Resolution A054 states that “Bishops exercising ecclesiastical authority or, where appropriate, ecclesiastical supervision will make provision for all couples asking to be married in this Church to have access to these liturgies.” How provision is made for this is left to the discretion of the Bishop. Suggestions mentioned for dioceses where the bishop does not grant permission for the trial use of these liturgies include making arrangements with a neighboring diocese for clergy to officiate using these liturgies in the neighboring diocese, and/or inviting clergy from another diocese to officiate in the diocese using these liturgies either in church buildings or other venues. Other ways in which provision is made might be shared among the bishops.

...The 1979 Book of Common Prayer *“The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage,”* along with *“The Blessing of a Civil Marriage”* and *“An Order for Marriage”* from the 1979 Book of Common Prayer remain liturgies for use with different-sex couples. *“The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage 2,”* as authorized for trial use by the 78<sup>th</sup> General Convention is available for use by **all couples** beginning Advent I, 2015.