

Policy for Remarriage in the Diocese of Arkansas

The Episcopal Church's canon I.18 states that "No Member of the Clergy of this Church shall solemnize the marriage of any person who has been the husband or wife or any other person then living, nor shall any member of this Church enter into a marriage when either of the contracting parties has been the husband or the wife of any other person then living, except as hereinafter provided:

- (a) The Member of the Clergy shall be satisfied by appropriate evidence that the prior marriage has been annulled or dissolved by a final judgment or decree of a civil court of competent jurisdiction.
- (b) The Member of the Clergy shall have instructed the parties that continuing concern must be shown for the well-being of the former spouse, and of any children of the prior marriage.
- (c) The Member of the Clergy shall consult with and obtain the consent of the Bishop of the Diocese wherein the Minister of the Clergy is canonically resident or the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Member of the Clergy is licensed to officiate prior to, and shall report to that Bishop, the solemnization of any marriage under this Section.
- (d) If the proposed marriage is to be solemnized in a jurisdiction other than the one in which the consent has been given, the consent shall be affirmed by the Bishop of that jurisdiction."

Please send the request for the bishop's permission at least thirty days prior to the planned date of the wedding.

Generally, request for permission to remarry while a former spouse is still alive should not take place less than a year after the dissolution of the previous marriage. A lengthy separation might shorten this time. If a priest is asking for permission to officiate at a marriage within this shortened time frame, the reasons should be mentioned in the request to the bishop.

Non-Parishioners

Occasionally Episcopalians go to some priest other than their own rector or vicar to seek remarriage after a divorce. It is essential in such cases for the priests to consult one another before one of them agrees to officiate at a wedding.

Non-Episcopalians

Sometimes the unchurched or those who are part of another Christian tradition will come to an Episcopal priest to be remarried in the Episcopal Church. Please remember that it is often a desire, perhaps subconscious, to connect with God when people come to church. Please treat these people with the same respect and seriousness that members of our own tradition are treated. Our priests are free, of course to decline to officiate at any such marriage. In any such proposed remarriage, the permission from the bishop is necessary.