

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT
APPLICATION FOR MARRIAGE JUDGMENT
SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

1. Both parties must fill out and sign "**part one.**"
2. Each party whose previous marriage has been dissolved by civil decree must fill out and sign forms labeled "**part two.**"
3. If for either party there have been additional previous marriages dissolved by civil decree, the party to those marriages must fill out and sign the appropriate number of forms labeled "**part three.**"
4. The minister must be satisfied that the former marriages have in fact been dissolved, and will so attest to the Bishop by signing the "Minister's Certificate" on "part one."
5. The minister will write a letter generally of two or more pages in length to the Bishop, addressing the following points:
 - A. "The Minister 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." (Canon I, 19, 3b)
 1. What provisions have been made in either case?
 5. Have these provisions been carried out?
 6. Are there unresolved issues from the former marriage?
 - B. Marriage is viewed "with intent that it be lifelong." (Canon I, 18, 2b)
 1. Did the divorced person view his or her marriage in this way from the outset? .
 2. What do you see were the causes of the breakdown of the former marriage?
 3. What has the divorced person learned about himself/herself?
 4. What is different in the proposed marriage that makes the petitioners believe theirs will be lifelong?
 - C. Christian marriage is "entered into within the community of faith."
 1. What does the couple understand this to mean?
 2. What kind of involvement has each of them had in the life of the Church?
 3. Why does the couple believe that marriage in the Church is important?
 4. What steps have been taken with them for instruction in Christian marriage?
 5. What relationship do they have with you? For how long?
 6. Do you regard them as a Church family or becoming a Church family?
6. The cleric who will officiate at the marriage must submit the application with his or her accompanying letter far enough in advance so that the Bishop will have thirty days in which to review the request. Normally therefore, for the sake of giving the couple adequate time to complete their wedding arrangements, the application should be submitted to the Bishop at least **sixty days** before the date anticipated for the marriage.

Title I Canon 19: Of Regulations Respecting Holy Matrimony: Concerning Preservation of Marriage, Dissolution of Marriage, and Remarriage

Sec. 1. When marital unity is imperiled by dissension, it shall be the duty, if possible, of either or both parties, before taking legal action, to lay the matter before a Member of the Clergy; it shall be the duty of such Member of the Clergy to act first to protect and promote the physical and emotional safety of those involved and only then, if it be possible, to labor that the parties may be reconciled.

Sec. 2 (a) Any member of this Church whose marriage has been annulled or dissolved by a civil court may apply to the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese in which such person is legally or canonically resident for a judgment as to his or her marital status in the eyes of the Church. Such judgment may be a recognition of the nullity, or of the termination of the said marriage; *Provided*, that no such judgment shall be construed as affecting in any way the legitimacy of children or the civil validity of the former relationship.

(b) Every judgment rendered under this Section shall be in writing and shall be made a matter of permanent record in the Archives of the Diocese.

Sec. 3. No Member of the Clergy of this Church shall solemnize the marriage of any person who has been the husband or wife of 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 Member 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.

Sec. 4. All provisions of Canon I.18 shall, in all cases, apply.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT
APPLICATION FOR THE BISHOP'S PERMISSION TO BE MARRIED IN THIS
CHURCH BY A PERSON WHOSE PREVIOUS MARRIAGE HAS BEEN ANNULLED OR
DISSOLVED BY A CIVIL COURT

part one: THE PROPOSED MARRIAGE

PETITIONER ONE _____

ADDRESS _____

CURRENT CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: _____

BIRTH DATE _____ PLACE _____

BAPTIZED? _____ CHURCH _____

PETITIONER TWO _____

ADDRESS _____

CURRENT CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: _____

BIRTH DATE _____ PLACE _____

BAPTIZED? _____ CHURCH _____

HOW LONG HAVE YOU KNOWN EACH OTHER? _____

ON WHAT DATE DO YOU PLAN THE (WEDDING) (BLESSING)? _____

IN WHAT CHURCH DO YOU PLAN TO BE MARRIED? _____

Signature _____ Signature _____

MINISTER'S CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that I have counseled with these persons and that the facts stated herein are true to the best of my knowledge and belief, and I have satisfied myself by appropriate evidence that the prior marriage(s) are annulled or dissolved by a final judgment or decree of a civil court of competent jurisdiction.

I further state that I have instructed these persons in the nature of Holy Matrimony and have conformed in all ways to Title I, Canons 18 and 19 of the Episcopal Church.

I am willing to solemnize the marriage of these persons if permission is given by the Bishop.

Signature of Cleric _____ Title _____

Parish _____ Phone _____

Town _____ Date _____

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part two: THE FORMER MARRIAGE

NAME OF PETITIONER _____

DATE OF PREVIOUS MARRIAGE _____ TOWN AND STATE _____

RELIGIOUS CEREMONY? ___ WHAT FAITH OR DENOMINATION? _____

NAME OF FORMER SPOUSE _____

BIRTH DATE OF FORMER SPOUSE _____

DID YOU RECEIVE INSTRUCTION ON CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE? _____

CHILDREN OF PREVIOUS MARRIAGE, WITH DATES OF BIRTH: _____

SPOUSE SUPPORT and CUSTODY AGREEMENT: _____

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT WERE THE CAUSES FOR THE FAILURE OF YOUR
PREVIOUS MARRIAGE? _____

DID YOU SEEK COUNSELING? _____ FROM WHOM? _____

HOW MANY CONFERENCES WERE HELD? _____ WAS SPOUSE PRESENT? _____

WHAT OTHER EFFORTS WERE MADE TOWARD RECONCILIATION? _____

DATE OF TERMINATION OF LIVING TOGETHER _____

DATE OF FINAL DIVORCE DECREE _____

HAS YOUR FORMER SPOUSE REMARRIED? _____ WHEN? _____

HAVE YOU EVER APPLIED PREVIOUSLY TO AN EPISCOPAL PRIEST TO BE
REMARRIED? _____ WHEN? _____

Date _____ Signature _____

Address _____

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part three: OTHER PREVIOUS MARRIAGES

(One form must be filed for each additional previous marriage.)

NAME OF PETITIONER _____

DATE OF THIS MARRIAGE _____ TOWN AND STATE _____

RELIGIOUS CEREMONY? _____ WHAT FAITH OR DENOMINATION? _____

NAME OF FORMER SPOUSE _____

BIRTH DATE OF FORMER SPOUSE _____

DID YOU RECEIVE INSTRUCTION ON CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE? _____

CHILDREN OF PREVIOUS MARRIAGE, WITH DATES OF BIRTH: _____

SPOUSE SUPPORT/CUSTODY AGREEMENT: _____

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT WERE THE CAUSES FOR THE FAILURE OF YOUR
PREVIOUS MARRIAGE? _____

DID YOU SEEK COUNSELING? _____ FROM WHOM? _____

HOW MANY CONFERENCES WERE HELD? _____ WAS SPOUSE PRESENT? _____

WHAT OTHER EFFORTS WERE MADE TOWARD RECONCILIATION? _____

DATE OF TERMINATION OF LIVING TOGETHER _____

DATE OF FINAL DIVORCE DECREE _____

HAS FORMER SPOUSE REMARRIED? _____ WHEN? _____

LENGTH OF TIME BETWEEN THIS DIVORCE AND YOUR NEXT MARRIAGE: _____

Date _____ Signature _____

Third Marriages

Need for second counselor evaluation in cases of two or more divorces.

Title I, Canons 18 and 19, outline the Episcopal Church's position on Holy Matrimony and give some guidelines governing the circumstances under which a priest could perform marriages.

Canon 19, Sections 2 and 3, and the subsections under these, give guidelines to the clergy person contemplating the remarriage of persons previously divorced. The canons are silent with regard to procedures in cases where a person requiring remarriage by one of our priests has been divorced more than once. It has been the position in the Diocese of Connecticut that in a case in which a petitioner for remarriage has been divorced more than once: "that the church's blessings be withheld until there is convincing evidence that there are grounds for a secure and stable new marriage.. In instances where a partner (or both partners) to a proposed marriage has recorded a failure to establish a lasting relationship more than once, it is essential that one or both persons undertake careful preparation with competent professional guidance to explore all the ramifications of the previous breakdowns. The intent of this is not punitive; on the contrary, it is a serious effort to support their effort to make a life together."

One of the ways we meet this requirement is to ask the priest to have the parties meet with a professional counselor after meeting with the priest. We are perfectly cognizant of the fact that most persons contemplating remarriage would be unable to spend six months or a year "exploring all the ramifications of the previous breakdowns" (even though there may be some times when even this is indicated). The compromise then is to have the professional counselor *meet with the couple*, and particularly with the petitioner more-than-once divorced, to adequately evaluate and give feedback on the following:

1. **The "rebound syndrome"** - Is the person leaping into another marriage to "quiet" the pain of the last two?
2. **The "merry marrier"** syndrome - Is there a compulsive need to leap into serious relationships without serious thought or preparation?
3. **No emotional closure on the past** - Is there a persistence of anger, grief, punitiveness, fear, etc., which could make it impossible or extremely difficult to fully commit oneself to the next marriage?
4. **Perseverance in spite of pessimism** - Deep-seated feelings of failure that cause a person to be pessimistic about future relationships, while hopeful that the next time around would provide a magic solution.
5. **Personality patterns and traits** currently operative which could make another marriage very risky.
6. **Enlightenment and feedback** - The counselor could alert the parties to unhealthy patterns of interaction and reiterate their need for alertness in seeking third party mediation quickly when problems arise in the marriage.

Third Marriages, Cont.

These are some of the reasons for the second - counselor evaluation. The main thing is to test, as far as humanly possible, the readiness of the person to enter a third marriage. Our intention is that the proposed marriage could turn out to be a "lifelong union of mutual physical, psychological, spiritual, emotional benefit to the parties contracting the marriage and to any offspring which could issue".

In no human endeavor is there perfection, and evaluation for remarriage is no exception. No system is fool proof. The hope is that conscientious evaluation and counseling by priest and/or designated counselor, along with the Bishop's input to the process, will go a long way toward helping people to find the type of substantial satisfaction in their marriage which the Lord would have them enjoy.

+Clarence N. Coleridge
Bishop of Connecticut

10/1991