

THE BISHOP'S ROLE

The following items require you to contact your bishop.

1. Anyone seeking a second marriage needs to receive episcopal approval for the remarriage (*process listed below*)
2. Significant changes in liturgy (*see explanation below*)
3. Hiring or firing of a rector
4. Accusations of misconduct
5. Ordination process (see PEARUSA Credentialing Guide)
6. Significant financial problems
7. Church division or factions

Remarriage

1. Our pastoral concern should be that the issues that ended the marriage(s) have been addressed and that sufficient time has passed to grieve the previous marriage(s) and address issues from the previous marriages. The *minimum* appropriate time period to even begin premarital counseling is one year from the date of the divorce.
2. You will need to meet with the couple a minimum of 4 times (in no less than 45 days) in order to submit a request to the bishop for remarriage (A date for the proposed marriage should not be set until permission has been obtained). In these meetings you will assess:
 - a. You should be assured that the new partner was not in any way party to or responsible for the break-up of the previous marriage.
 - b. Have they approached any other minister about this proposed marriage before coming to you? If yes, give details.
 - c. In your opinion, is (are) the previous marriage(s) psychologically and practically ended?
 - d. Are you satisfied that obligations to the former spouse and/or children have been or are being fulfilled responsibly?
 - e. What do you think the divorced applicant(s) has (have) learned from the previous marriage(s) which will help the proposed marriage succeed?
 - f. What other factors make you think the proposed marriage will be successful?
 - g. What problems do you see ahead?
 - h. Do you think the applicants are dealing soundly with the realities and potential problems?
 - i. Does the couple demonstrate that they bring strength and insight into this new relationship, and have a strong spiritual understanding of the sanctity of marriage?
3. Following these meetings, the Rector will write the Bishop a one-page letter indicating why he supports or does not support the candidate's second marriage.
4. Upon receiving the report, the Bishop may request the following: Written statements from the marriage party indicating why they are seeking a second marriage. Additionally, the Bishop can assign more marriage counseling and study to the parties involved. Finally, the Bishop may request a face-to-face meeting prior to granting his approval for the marriage.
5. The Rector should continue, then, with further pre-marital counseling (or assuring that there is adequate pre-marital counseling).

Significant Changes in the Liturgy

1. How we worship is important – how we worship will shape what we believe. Our liturgy is an important means of teaching theology – having a liturgy that is strong theologically will help form a people who are strong theologically.
2. The reasons for changes in the liturgy should reflect what the 1662 Book of Common Prayer (BCP) preface states: *“Our general aim therefore in this undertaking was, not to gratify this or that party, in any of their unreasonable demands; but to do that, which to our best understanding, we conceived might most tend to peace and unity in the Church; the procuring of reverence, and exciting of piety and devotion in the public worship of God.”* The boundaries for change, that our liturgy is consistent with the scriptures, are also given in the preface, *“it does not contain in it anything contrary to the Word of God, or to sound Doctrine, or which a godly man may not with a good conscience use and submit to.”*
3. Any changes to liturgy must also reflect what the “Concerning the Service of the Church” section of the 1662 BCP states, *“Nothing is ordained to be read, but the very pure Word of God, the holy Scriptures, or that which is agreeable to the same, and that in such a language and order as is most easy and plain for the understanding both of the readers and hearers.”* The latter part is not setting the bar low or shaping our worship to the lowest common denominator – but that our liturgy should not be overly complicated and hard to follow or understand.
4. However these changes must be done under authority – this is to avoid what we see in Deuteronomy 12:8, *“You are not to do as we do here today, everyone as he sees fit.”* The 1662 states, *“no one ought to take responsibility for, nor presume to appoint or alter any public or common Order in Christ's Church, unless he is lawfully called and authorized to do so.”* The 1662 also states that those who want diversity or have doubts are to take that concern to *“the Bishop of the Diocese, who by his discretion shall take order for the quieting and appeasing of the same.”* Therefore, any significant deviation from the accepted liturgies needs approval from your bishop.