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Introduction to the  
Preparation for and Celebration of  
Holy Matrimony

April 7, 2014

Thank you for contacting me to inquire about marriage preparation and/or officiating at your wedding. I look forward to meeting with you as you prepare for this significant step in your lives.

I am an Episcopal priest, and therefore, must conform to the canons/laws of The Episcopal Church in officiating at a wedding, even if it is not done in an Episcopal Church (e.g., if it is done in Evans Chapel at the University of Denver, or if it is done out-of-doors). The Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* (1979), in the introductory remarks to “The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage” states:

Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God. In the Episcopal Church it is required that one, at least, of the parties must be a baptized Christian; that the ceremony be attested by at least two witnesses; and that the marriage conform to the laws of the State and the canons of this Church (BCP, 422).

In fulfillment of the last clause of that statement, the following requirements must be met:

- That both parties have the right to contract a marriage according to the laws of the State.
- If either party has been married previously, I must be satisfied that 1) the previous marriage has been dissolved legally; and 2) that any children of that union are adequately provided for. In addition, I must apply to the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Colorado for permission to perform the wedding (this is a formality; I have very rarely known it to be denied).
- I must be satisfied that both parties understand that Holy Matrimony is a physical and spiritual union of a man and a woman, entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent of heart, mind and will, and with intent that it be lifelong. This is achieved in two ways: 1), the signing of a Declaration of Intention (copy attached), and, 2) premarital counseling (either done by me or by a mutually agreed-upon third party).
- I must have thirty days notice prior to the wedding date.

As an Episcopal priest, in working with you develop a marriage ceremony, I use, as a starting point, the form set out in the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* (1979)—someone once remarked that

everyone is Episcopalian when they get married or buried. That being said, it must also be noted that there is great latitude allowed by that Book. We will discuss the various options, and how we could tailor the service to meet your needs and desires. (I have done weddings between a Jew and Christian, and a Buddhist and a Christian using the Prayer Book service.)

With regard to premarital counseling, I generally assume that I will meet with one or both of you a total of four or five times (each meeting lasting about one hour). The structure/content of those meetings will be as follows:

- First: General introduction with both parties; filling out of questionnaire
- Second: Individual meeting with bride/groom
- Third: Individual meeting with groom/bride
- Fourth: Joint meeting
- Fifth: Joint meeting (if necessary)

The second and third meetings can happen on the same day. There is generally at least a week, however, separating the other meetings.

I do not require that couples read the following books as part of their marriage preparation, but I do suggest that they may be helpful as you examine your lives together. Either of them should be good conversation-starters; my preference is for Deborah Tannen's book:

Gray, John. *Men are from Mars; Women are from Venus*  
and/or

Tannen, Deborah. *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*

I do not make a living doing weddings, nor is it a regular part of my job; I assist in this way because I genuinely enjoy meeting and working with couples at this major life transition point. This does, however, demand a significant amount of my time. The honorarium, therefore, for these services are:

Premarital Counseling, Rehearsal & Wedding	\$500
Travel expenses, as allowed by IRS regulations	

Payment is due no later than the rehearsal (or last counseling session if I am only doing the counseling). Checks should be made out to "The Rev. Gary R. Brower."

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me and voice them. I look forward to working with you!

Yours truly,

The Rev. Gary R. Brower, PhD  
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# Holy Matrimony

## Declaration of Intention

We, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the liturgical forms authorized by this Church. We believe that it is for the purpose of mutual fellowship, encouragement, and understanding, for the procreation (if it may be) of children, and their physical and spiritual nurture, and for the safeguarding and benefit of society, and we do and engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God's help thereto.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Groom

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bride

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date