
What is Marriage?

**An article from the Cathedral Times
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler**

What a Spring and Summer of marriages it has been! As I performed my annual end-of-summer personal review, I realized how many weddings I have been involved in during the last five months. Each has been tremendous, but I must also admit that each one had its own special character and identity, too. Each one was also different.

And what a myriad of different services I witnessed and participated in! From a "wife-obey-your-husband" wedding on a hillside in Maryland to a self-described atheist wedding in north Atlanta! I become thankful that we in the Episcopal Church are blessed with a Book of Common Prayer that presents a beautiful and established liturgy. In fact, I often notice when I attend other weddings how much of the service is derived from our own Episcopal liturgy. For good reason. That set of prayers has worked beautifully and effectively over the years; why change it?

Of course, throughout history, humankind has changed; and we have recognized marriage in different ways. No matter the culture, something powerful occurs when two people pledge their lives to one another. Almost every culture recognizes that power and ends up ritualizing the event. The result is love and festivity!

This Sunday, at the Dean's Forum, I will devote our time to the question, "What is Marriage?" Of course, in forty-five minutes, it will not be an exhaustive presentation. But I will review the various weddings I have witnessed lately, and I will analyze our present Book of Common Prayer wedding service. Finally, as is necessary these days, we will discuss the evolving cultural nature of marriage. We will discuss "covenant," and what that means for the Episcopal Church. Surely, we will return to that subject in further forums in the Fall! Join us!