

Traditional weddings in style for those getting hitched

Traditional weddings are back in style.

Georgetown's Knox Presbyterian Church minister Rev. Peter Barrow says the traditional wedding service has been very popular with couples over the past three years.

"For a while there, it had been guitars and groups singing the bride down the aisle," Rev. Barrow said. "Now the girls seem to want their fathers marching them down the aisle, with organ music, and things like that."

Performing an average 40 to 50 weddings a year, Rev. Barrow said he always asks the couple if they want anything special in their ceremony.

"Most of them say no," he said. "How many times do you get married? You don't really know what to do. Most of those who want to do their own (service) haven't the foggiest idea how to do it."

VERY PERSONAL

Having compared religious services of the various churches, Rev. Barrow said most are very similar. There are prayers, some statements, scriptural readings and music. The only difference is in the organization - one may have scriptural readings at the beginning whereas another may have them at the end of the service, he said.

"I think a wedding should be very personal and people taking part in it should remember it. It should be a high spot in their life which they can remember for years to come," Rev. Barrow said.

One wedding that really stands out in his mind, besides his own, was one in which 12 candles were lit by the ushers and bridesmaids, each expressing a wish for the future of the couple.

REHEARSAL

"It was so complicated. It had to be done precisely and it took us three hours the evening before to rehearse it," he said. "I knew it could either go over like a lead balloon or it could look good. Fortunately it went over beautifully."

When couples want to do their own thing, it means extra work for the minister who has to make sure that

Peter Barrow



what the couple is proposing is proper and within the limits of the church's theology, Rev. Barrow said.

At St. George's Anglican Church in Georgetown, 75 per cent of wedding ceremonies are done according to the new rite which was brought in five years ago by the Anglican Church of Canada.

Rev. Jim Boyles explained that the new wedding rite updated the language and revised parts of the traditional prayerbook service.

BLESSINGS

For example, no longer does the minister ask "Who gives this woman to be married to this man?" Instead, the parents are asked if they give their blessings to the young couple to marry.

"That way, we eliminate the idea that the bride is a piece of property being given away. It's a big symbolic difference," Rev. Boyles said.

Only ten per cent and less of couples choose to create their own service, he said. Because very few of the couples being married have church connections except through their parents or grandparents, they lack the background about what the church is all about and find it easier to use the new rite instead of writing their own vows.

"When the couple are anxious to give time and attention to the service, it has much more meaning for them," Rev. Boyles said. "Often couples are much more interested in the photos and the party afterwards, and leave the service to just happen."

Get a professional when it comes to photos

The advice from wedding photographers is to not treat good wedding photography too lightly.

Book well in advance, photographers say, not leaving it less than six months before the wedding.

"I like to have the bride and groom in again about a month before the wedding," Georgetown's Jim Fishback said.

"I do a preview, take a few pictures from different angles and that gives me the opportunity to get to know them a bit and see how they react when having their picture taken."

Many people believe they aren't photogenic; but Mr. Fishback said "everybody has a good side in photography and it's up to the photographer to find it...to find the angle which really re-produces well and shows what the people are really like."

A good photographer checks with the priest, pastor or rabbi to make

sure the picture taking doesn't impose on the sanctity of the service.

"If we can find out what's happening in a ceremony, we can prepare for it," Mr. Fishback said.

"Things take place so fast, a certain action can easily be missed if you're not ready - and it can never be repeated."

While photographers have to consider protocol of the wedding service, wedding guests should be mindful of the photographer's job.

Armed with a variety of cameras, guests flock at the earliest opportunity to photograph the bride and groom.

But photographers suggest they give leeway to the gentleman who has been hired by the couple to take the official pictorial account of the ceremony.

Personality is a large part of the photographer's profession. His charm and patience must be maintained working with large and excited crowds as one might find at a wedding.

VOWS

Most often, couples ask the organist to play whatever they're used to playing for weddings or traditional wedding marches.

Tradition is that when the couple are exchanging their vows the priest repeats the line for them. That's not necessary, Rev. Boyles said. It's just done because the bride and groom get nervous. It's unusual that the two say their vows to each other without prompting.

Maple Avenue Baptist Church minister Rev. Edwin Mitchell said couples are still writing their own vows to make them more personal and real, using the basic ceremony as a guide.

"We had a wedding last year where the groom sang to the bride. It was very beautiful and very effective," Rev. Mitchell said. "It was a spiritual song of personal commitment to her."

He said he encourages the couples to tape the ceremony and play it as a reminder.

Marriage contracts a good idea

It may be worth your while to find out about marriage contracts before the big day.

Although they are still not very popular with young brides and grooms, those who are coming around for their second time to the altar are seriously looking into them.

Georgetown lawyer David Ashbee said he does about six a year, which aren't very many compared to the number of separation agreements his firm does.

"It doesn't seem to have caught on, although if maybe it had there wouldn't be so much of the other, separation agreements and negotiated court battles," Mr. Ashbee said. "Separation agreements are a major part of my business."

CUTS LEGAL BILLS

Done prior to the wedding day, a marriage contract is a realistic look at the assets each party is bringing to the marriage and defines what happens to those assets in the case of separation.

Not a pleasant way to start a marriage, perhaps, but it can prevent the vast expense of legal bills and court costs when there isn't such an agreement. Mr. Ashbee called it a type of protection.

"It's really made for people who have assets they're bringing into the marriage. It's not nearly as important for people who are starting out and have no assets," Mr. Ashbee said. "It's ready-made for people who are into second marriages, who have kids from their first marriage they want to make sure benefit from their assets when they die."

CLAUSES

By signing a marriage contract, a couple is exempting themselves from the Ontario Family Law Reform Act which says that family assets, that is, things used and enjoyed by the family, are to be divided 50-50 in the case of separation.

Of course, the Ontario statute is making an assumption which can be rebutted by either party who feels they have more than a 50 per cent claim to family assets, Mr. Ashbee said.

Like any contract, a marriage agreement has standard clauses which can vary depending on the individual. If there's big dollars involved, Mr. Ashbee said it's silly for a couple to make up their own agreement without a lawyer.

If both parties don't have personal lawyers, it can be argued later that one of them didn't have legal representation and was intimidated into signing the contract.

BINDING

"It's a valid and binding thing. It's just that it's so easy for a lawyer to turn around and make a case out of it," Mr. Ashbee said. "And, then, you haven't saved the expense of a separation."

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