

## **Christian Weddings at St. James the Apostle**

We rejoice with you as you prepare to enter into Holy Matrimony. As you prepare for this wonderful moment in your lives there are a few things to keep in mind.

Marriage is a sacrament of the church. This is a holy moment and a time of prayer. You will be kept in our prayers, so when things seem hectic or even out of control know that you are being remembered in prayer.

### **Prayer for Engaged Couples**

**Heavenly Father,**

**In your great love you have established marriage as blessing and grace for your people.**

**Bless and assist those who are preparing to receive this wonderful sacrament. Give them your patience during times of stress.**

**Give them reassurance in times of doubt and give them joy as the time of their wedding draws near.**

**Increase their love for one another, for their families and for YOU.**

**We ask this in the name of Jesus, Our Lord. Amen.**

It is our hope that this will be a valuable resource in planning your wedding and insuring a beautiful and reverent occasion. Although a book of regulations by its very nature seems rigid, we know that your wedding experience conducted at St. James the apostle will be a warm and spiritually enhancing event.

As a couple, the first question you need to ask yourselves is whether you want a Christian marriage with all its implications of commitment to the Church and its Lord.

Historically, people have come to the Church because they want its life of faith to be an important part of their marital identity. It is vital for persons planning to be married within the Church to understand that Christian marriage involves a belief that God, through Jesus Christ, will play an important role in the marital relationship. There is a risk that the deep and wonderful meaning of Christian marriage can be lost when the Church is used simply as “*a beautiful setting*” for a ceremony.

If you seriously consider the implications involved in a Christian relationship and determine that these will be applicable to your common life, you should feel confident that being married at St. James Church is an appropriate means by which to be united as husband and wife. We do not marry persons who are not willing to make this commitment.

If Christian marriage in the tradition of the Episcopal Church is your decision, then you will want to read that which follows as an aid in understanding the specific procedures involved in a wedding in this church. This is written for persons considering marriage in the Episcopal Church and specifically a wedding in St. James the Apostle Episcopal Parish. We hope that it will answer some of the many questions that arise as marriage in the Church is contemplated. The Wedding Day will take a great deal of planning and we are here to help. We have lots of experience and are glad to share it with you.

## **“Who may be married at St. James the Apostle Church?”**

A man and woman sincere in a commitment to establish a Christian marriage and willing to conform to the standards set forth may be married in St. James Church. The Canons of the Episcopal Church require that at least one of the two persons to be married must be baptized. Our policy is to have a three-month period between the wedding request and the wedding to allow for scheduling and counseling. In addition, parish policy directs that only persons in the following categories may be married in St. James Church:

1. Confirmed members of this parish.
2. Baptized members of this parish.
3. Immediate family members of confirmed and baptized members of this parish.
4. Persons not yet formally affiliated with the parish but who worship here regularly with the intent to regularize their relationship with the parish, and whose participation in parish life is known.
5. Episcopalians in the Diocese of Texas whose own priest requests the use of St. James church.
6. Episcopalians outside of the Diocese of Texas whose circumstances require a Texas wedding and whose own priest have made arrangements with the clergy of this parish.

If either party has been divorced, permission to remarry must be obtained from the Bishop of Texas. It is the responsibility of the clergy to submit all applications. In such cases, a copy of the divorce decree must be given to the officiating priest and the date of the wedding must not be set until permission from the Bishop has been received.

## **“How are wedding arrangements made?”**

After reading this and agreeing that Christian marriage with the Episcopal Church is the desire of both parties, make an appointment with the rector, giving a proposed date for the wedding. No wedding may be placed permanently on the parish calendar until the couple has met with the clergy and the proper forms are on file in the parish office. This means, of course, that **no public wedding announcements or any other arrangements should be made until the meeting with the rector** and the date and time have been mutually agreed upon and confirmed in writing.

## **“What takes place at the initial clergy meeting?”**

The couple, with the assistance of the priest, completes the necessary marriage forms and reviews this information in detail. Counsel concerning the nature of Christian marriage is part of the preparation.

This meeting, normally scheduled during regular office hours, lasts about an hour. At the conclusion of the first interview with the clergy, the form for time and date of wedding and rehearsal will be signed by the couple and a copy placed on file in the parish office. Two or more additional meetings will be arranged at this time to complete the required preparation for marriage. These meetings will be scheduled with the officiating priest.

## **“What form of service is permissible?”**

Holy Matrimony at St. James is performed within the rich liturgical tradition of the Episcopal Church. The “Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage”, beginning on page 423 of *The Book of Common Prayer*, is the form of service. Since liturgy is a corporate heritage, the service is performed according to the traditions of St. James Church and it may not be re-written. Only those options authorized by the prayer book rubrics may be exercised, and no additions may be made to the prayer book service as it stands. Please read the service as well as “Concerning the service,” page 422, and “Additional Directions”, page 437, before the initial clergy meeting. Copies of *The Book of Common Prayer* are available for check out in the Parish Office.

## **“Who may officiate?”**

Only clergy on the parish staff may officiate. At the discretion of the parish clergy, other Episcopal clergy and ministers of other denominations may assist in the service if the involvement is justified. In any case, the standards of weddings set forth in this booklet are to be followed. When clergy outside the parish are involved, it is proper for one of the clergy of St. James Church to extend a formal invitation.

## **“What time of the year is best for weddings?”**

Weddings are not permitted during the penitential seasons of Advent or Lent or during Holy Week. No weddings or rehearsals may be scheduled in conflict with the daily services of the church and the number of weddings on any particular date may be limited. Special arrangements may be necessary around the major festivals of the Church year, such as Christmas and Easter.

## “What about the rehearsal?”

Usually scheduled the day before the wedding, the rehearsal is the opportunity to review the mechanics involved in the wedding service itself and is an important part of the wedding preparation. It lasts no more than one hour. **All** participants should be present and **on time**. All in the bridal party should wear proper attire at the wedding rehearsal. That means no shorts, halter-tops, tank tops or mid-drifts, baseball caps, torn jeans, sunglasses, flip flops or other inappropriate attire. The entire wedding party walks through the service with the clergy in attendance. The Altar Guild Wedding Coordinators are also present to assist at this time. Only the simplest of weddings do not require a rehearsal. Bridal consultants are not allowed in connection with the church service or decoration. This is the appropriate time for the state license and church certificate to be signed and completed. The marriage license should be obtained approximately one to two weeks prior to the ceremony. In Texas, licenses are valid for 29 days and have a 72- hour dormant period. A marriage license can be obtained at any courthouse in Texas and is valid in any county of the state.

## “What about music?”

The couple should contact the parish organist-choir director for an appointment at least three weeks in advance of the wedding date to work out the musical details of the wedding. Only the parish organist is permitted to play at weddings. In the event he/she is unavailable, an organist from outside the parish may play with the approval of the parish organist. The only restriction upon music is that it must come from the appropriate repertoire of liturgical music written for the Church. Secular music may not be used, as the wedding service is itself an act of worship. Prelude begins approximately 15 minutes prior to the wedding.

## “What rules govern photography?”

Since the service of Holy Matrimony is a sacred event, distractions created by photography are not permitted. To preserve the spirit of reverence, which should be encouraged in the church, the following rules on photography are to be strictly observed.

1. Only professional photographers are allowed to take pictures inside the sanctuary.
2. The empty, decorated church may be photographed before any guests arrive.
3. No photographs of any kind are allowed, with or without flash, in the church or chapel from the beginning of the prelude to the conclusion of the organ postlude; with the exception of one photograph as the bridal party enters the Church and one as the newly-married couple leave the back of the Church. Ushers should remind arriving guests with cameras of this regulation to avoid disrupting the service.
4. Photographs may be taken before or after the wedding in the church, parlor, or on the lawns. All photography prior to the service must be completed at least 45 minutes before the appointed time for the wedding.
5. Photographs may be taken for 30 minutes after the wedding.
6. **Professional** photography and videotaping is allowed in the loft with the approval of the officiant. The camera must be on a tripod using available light only, and all equipment must be in place 45 minutes before the wedding.
7. **The photographer and videographer must receive a copy of these guidelines. They may be viewed from the website at [www.stjames-conroe.org/wedding](http://www.stjames-conroe.org/wedding). It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to make clear these customs and rules to the photographer and all persons involved in the wedding**
  1. Photographers must **NOT** move around during the service.

## **“What about flowers, wedding decorations, and fixtures in the church?”**

Please telephone the Wedding Director of the Altar Guild for an appointment well in advance of the wedding. A worksheet will be filled out at this time regarding flowers, decorations, fixtures in the church and dressing rooms. The governing rule is that decorations should be in moderation and not detract from the church itself.

All flowers for the altar must be arranged under the supervision of the Wedding Director and in containers provided by the church. Silk or plastic flowers are not appropriate or allowed in the church. It is customary to leave your flowers in the church for the weekend services. Your florist should pick up the liners for the altar vases from the church **3 days** before the wedding and deliver the altar flowers at least 2 hours prior to the service. Altar flowers should not be taller than or obscure the visibility of the cross. Church fixtures, including furniture, cannot be displaced or removed. Any details beyond these should be negotiated with the officiating priest and not the Altar Guild. All church decorations must be in place **2 hours** before the service. If your wedding is on Saturday, you are welcome to use the altar flowers that will be on the altar for Sunday services. There is no charge for using these.

## **Wedding Procedures**

If the bridal party wishes to dress at the church, we suggest arrival at least one and one-half hours before the wedding. The Wedding Coordinators will assist in any way necessary at this time.

At least two gentlemen, apart from the groomsmen should be asked to serve as ushers. The primary duties of the ushers are to assist in the seating of the guests and family members and to aid in opening the doors from the entrance and departure of the bridal procession. Groomsmen may also help the ushers with the seating of the guests. Following the ceremony, the ushers should insure that the church is in good order by picking up any left over programs, floral containers or other items left by the bridal party or guests.

Ushers are asked to arrive at least one hour before the service and should remind guests with cameras that photographs are not permitted. Since the church is a place of worship, no food or drink may be carried into the church at any time, and conversation inside the church is inappropriate.

No alcoholic beverages are allowed in the church building, grounds or dressing rooms. Any member of the wedding party who is intoxicated will not be allowed to participate in the service. There are to be no concealed handguns or weapons brought inside the church or other buildings.

The Church does not permit the throwing of birdseed, rice, paper hearts, flowers, or any other material in or around the building since it is both hazardous and disfiguring to the property.

If you have any questions regarding the service, please direct the inquiries to the officiate so that there is just one source of direction.

## Fee Schedule

Wedding Coordinator	\$150
Make check payable to St. James Altar Guild	
Organist – basic fee	\$175
Rehearsals are an additional	\$25/hour
Additional fees for special music	
Make check payable to organist	
Sexton	
Use of Church for Wedding	\$500
Use of Parish Hall for Reception (Includes utilities and cleaning)	\$750
Make check payable to St. James	
Clergy	
An honorarium is appropriate although not required. A suggested range is \$150-\$250 Make check payable to the rector who is officiating	