

**WEDDING POLICY**  
**St. James's Episcopal Church**  
1991 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA  
617.547.4070

*There is no greater joy nor any more demanding call than to grow in faithful love within the covenant of marriage. If you are contemplating marriage, the clergy and congregation of St. James's welcome you to become part of our community of worship and service in Cambridge, Massachusetts, so that we can provide support for you as you journey into the fullness of your covenant together.*

*We are an open and affirming church, welcoming all couples who wish to seek the sacrament of marriage.*

## **OVERVIEW, GETTING READY**

### The basics:

- Weddings at St. James's are scheduled at the discretion of its rector; other clergy may officiate subject to the rector's approval.
- Customarily, at least one of the marriage partners must be a member in good standing of St. James's, or closely related to a member in good standing.

### Scheduling:

- Because a wedding at St. James's involves the participation of a number of church staff and volunteers, and because weekend dates fill quickly, we ask for sufficient advance notice – several months is the norm.
- Weddings are typically held on Saturdays, with the time of the ceremony between 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. (Please note: we have a weekly food pantry from 10:00 to noon on Saturday mornings, with a large number of people awaiting food in our Parish House hallway.)
- If there is more than one wedding in the church on a given date, they must be scheduled at least four hours apart. Dates and times are scheduled on a first-come first-served basis and are reserved with a check for the full fee (see fee schedule below).
- We do not schedule weddings on Sundays or during Lent and Holy Week except in extraordinary circumstances.

### Requirements and Expectations:

- There are also some basic rules for marriage within the Episcopal Church: at least one of the partners must be a baptized Christian; the ceremony must be attested to by at least two witnesses; and the marriage must conform to the laws of the State and the canons of this Church.
- We also expect that you will engage in careful preparation for marriage with one of our clergy or in a process the rector has approved. Because the needs of individual

- couples vary, the time required for premarital counseling also varies, but will include a minimum of three sessions, with both the bride and the groom present.
- In situations in which one of the partners is living out of town, it is usually possible to make arrangements for counseling to be done by an Episcopal priest elsewhere, or in some cases to arrange pre-marital preparation via Skype. Those arrangements need to be made as early as possible with the rector. A written evaluation from the priest who has conducted the counseling will be needed.
  - Canon Law requires the consent of a bishop before Episcopal clergy can solemnize the marriage of anyone who has been divorced. It is our wisdom that there is a real need for time—generally a year—for a divorced person to work through the 'death' of the former marriage; the grief, forgiveness and learning, both secular and religious, from past experience. In addition, the bishop will need thirty (30) days in which to respond to the priest's request to solemnize the marriage. The couple must, therefore, have had several counseling sessions and given the priest photocopies of their divorce decree(s) no later than forty-five (45) days before the wedding date.
  - You will need to obtain a marriage license from the City Clerk's office of the City of Cambridge before your marriage can be performed. Please plan to bring the marriage license to the Church office before the Sunday prior to the wedding. The priest cannot officiate without the license. The priest will sign and mail the license after the wedding.

## **PREPARATIONS FOR THE CEREMONY**

### Rehearsal:

- The Altar Guild is charged with the responsibility of assisting the officiating priest with all arrangements for the wedding. The St. James's sexton will be present at both the rehearsal and the wedding to assist and support the wedding party with access to the premises. Outside consultants may consult with the clergy, but since a celebration of marriage is one of the sacraments of our church, outside consultants are not permitted to direct the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony.
- A wedding information form, obtained from the rector, should be completed by the couple well in advance of the wedding date, to help us prepare for the details of the ceremony.
- In order to give the wedding party the opportunity to become familiar with the service and at ease during the worship service itself, we hold a rehearsal on the preceding day with all the participants in the coming ceremony present. The officiating priest, assisted if necessary by the Altar Guild, will be responsible for the actual conduct of the rehearsal. Except in extremely unusual circumstances, rehearsals will be scheduled to begin promptly at 5 p.m. the day before the wedding, and end promptly at 6 p.m. The entire service, including ushering in of relatives and the entrance procession, will be rehearsed. It is important for all members of the wedding party to attend and for everyone to be on time. The clergy and assisting members of the altar guild are only expected to be in attendance at the rehearsal for one hour.
- Please come to the rehearsal prepared with a check for the full amount of the

Sexton's fee (see below) and a check for the full amount of the Minister of Music's fee (see below). In order to avoid possible delays, any rehearsal dinner should be scheduled for after the rehearsal.

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE CEREMONY**

### Marriage Service:

- **The Marriage Service:** Because marriage is a sacrament of the church, the officiating clergy has final responsibility for determining the appropriateness of all arrangements and details. These will be agreed upon in advance by clergy and the couple during the marriage preparation sessions.
- **The Clergy:** With the approval of the rector, a couple may invite an Episcopal priest from another parish, or diocese, a clergy person from another denomination to officiate or assist in the ceremony.
- **The Liturgy:** The service itself will be designed by the officiating clergy in partnership with the couple during marriage preparation sessions.
- **The Holy Eucharist:** Since the marriage service is a worship service involving the whole congregation, a celebration of the Holy Eucharist is often included. The decision to have the Eucharist will be made by the couple with the advice and counsel of the officiating priest.) When the Holy Eucharist is celebrated as a part of the marriage ceremony, all will be invited to share in this sacrament of unity.
- **The Wedding Music:** The bride and groom must contact St. James's Organist and Choirmaster, Pat Michaels, for a music consultation at least six (6) to eight (8) weeks before the wedding. He will either advise you about other musicians who may do your wedding if he is unavailable, or, if he intends to play for your wedding, he will assist you in the selection of music and can supply a list of additional instrumentalists, if desired. The Organist and Choirmaster will play at all weddings with music, unless he waives this right. There is a fee for his services (see below). Musicians in addition to the Organist and Choirmaster are welcome to participate in the service with his approval.

### Decoration of the Church:

- **Decoration of the Church:** The general principle to keep in mind is that a wedding is a worship service in which we seek to worship God with beauty and simplicity.
- **The Flowers:** The only flowers permitted at a wedding are two vases of altar flowers (such as those arranged by the Flower Guild every weekend for Sunday services) and flowers fixed to the pews along the center aisle.

Couples may provide their own flowers, or the couple may wish to request flowers arranged by the St. James's the Flower Guild. If a florist is used, there is no payment to the church. However, if the Flower Guild is responsible, a minimum fee of \$250.00 is charged. Couples are welcome to supplement that fee as their budgets permit in order to get a suitable arrangement you. It is expected that the wedding flowers are the property of the church, and they will remain in the Church for worship services on the following Sunday. The Sunday bulletin will identify the flowers as given in thanksgiving for the marriage. After services,

- they will then be delivered to the sick and shut-in. The couple should contact the parish office for the name and number of the Flower Guild member who will be assisting as soon as a date is established with the clergy. The Flower Guild member will then go over all the size and placement options, as well as any additional instructions, if a florist is to be used.
- **The Altar & Aisle:** The liturgical color for a wedding is white, the color of joy and celebration. Pew markers may be supplied by a florist and candle stands lining the center aisle may be requested at the time of reserving the wedding date. Aisle runners are hazardous and are not permitted.

Photography:

- **Photography:** While the Church is sensitive to the desire of the couple to preserve this important moment in their lives, it is also concerned that the dignity and reverence of the service be maintained, and that family and friends' experience of worship not be compromised. The cooperation of both partners and the entire wedding party is sought and appreciated.

Photographs may not be taken in the church during the marriage service from the time the clergy enter until they leave, with the following exceptions: One flash picture may be taken as the couple exits the Church into the narthex. A stationary video camera may be set up in a discrete place, where it doesn't draw attention to itself, and audio-taping is permitted, provided that no additional lighting or microphones are required and that set up is completed thirty (30) minutes prior to the service. Photographs may, of course, be taken either before or after the wedding. If another wedding scheduled, the time allotted for photographs will have to be limited.

- **Photography Sessions prior to the Wedding:** Photos cannot begin at the church more than two hours before the wedding and sessions cannot conflict with other weddings held at St. James's on the same day.
- **Photography Sessions following the Wedding:** Extended photography sessions after the service can be difficult for the wedding guests waiting for a reception and for the Altar Guild and the sexton, who need to prepare the Church for Sunday. A workable solution is to complete all but one or two photos prior to the service. The wedding party and photographers must vacate the church forty-five (45) minutes before the wedding is to begin.

Before and after the Service:

- **Dressing at the Church:** We currently have no parish house, so the wedding party must make other arrangements for pre-service dressing and so forth. Smoking or drinking of alcoholic beverages on our premises is not permitted. Someone in the wedding party should remove all personal belongings from the back of the church immediately after the wedding and assure that all is left as the wedding party found them. The parish cannot be responsible for lost or stolen items.
- **The Guest Book:** Please plan to have your guest book at the reception rather than the church.
- **Pets, Rice, Confetti, Bird Seed & Bubbles:** Pets may attend a reception but not

the wedding ceremony. Rice and confetti are not to be thrown at or on the wedding couple on church property. Birdseed and bubbles may be used ONLY out of doors.

- **Receptions:** The Parish Hall and Garden are not currently available for wedding receptions due to construction.
- **Alcohol Policy:** Consumption of alcohol is not permitted on church property except at the reception in the Church's Parish Hall or Garden, and in accordance with diocesan policy. Non-alcoholic beverages in equal quantity and prominence must be offered if alcohol is served.
- **Traffic:** If the size of the wedding indicates the need for a traffic officer, one may be obtained by calling the City of Cambridge Police Department. As a rule, cash is expected for payment.

Fees:

- **Church Donations & Fees:** It is expected that all fees will be paid when the marriage license is brought to the Church on the Sunday prior to the wedding. They must be paid prior to the rehearsal.
- **Use of Church**  
For members who have made a pledge: \$250.  
For nonmembers: \$500.  
This fee must be paid at the time the wedding date is reserved, to hold the date.
- **Use of Parish Hall, Garden & Kitchen for Receptions**  
Not currently available, due to construction.
- **Clergy:** Clergy Gift: As a sacrament of the church, marriage is offered by the priest without charge. In thanksgiving for their marriage, many couples make a contribution to the discretionary fund of the clergy person presiding at the services. This is optional, yet customary.
- **Music**  
Organist & Choirmaster fee: \$ 250.00  
Soloist fee: varies depending on soloist.
- **Flowers**  
If St. James's supplies the altar flowers: \$ 250.00
- **Sexton's Fee:** The Sexton receives a minimum of \$250. If his/her services extend over several days for deliveries and so forth, that fee will be doubled.