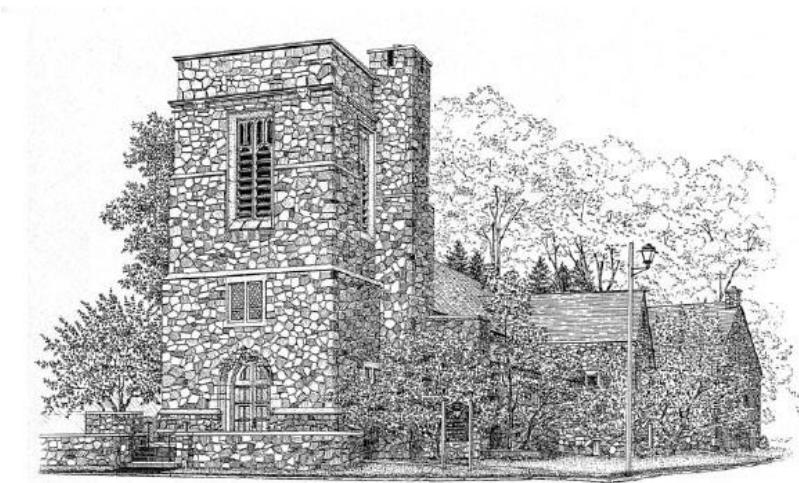


St. James Episcopal Church Woodstock, Vermont



Preparing for Marriage

A brief guide

Congratulations! We are delighted that you are considering being married at St. James. This booklet aims to give you some basic information on weddings at St. James. Please contact us if you have questions.

Marriage in the Episcopal Church – The *Book of Common Prayer* says that Christian marriage is, “a solemn and public covenant...[made] in the presence of God.” In this sacramental rite, the couple formally enters into a relationship like that between God and God’s people – one which is characterized by, “fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God.”

The Episcopal Church’s marriage canons apply equally to heterosexual and same-sex couples. St. James welcomes all who wish to make this lifelong commitment in a Christian context.

The marriage service itself will follow the rite for The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage contained in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Other forms authorized by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church and/or the Bishop of Vermont may also be used at the rector’s discretion.

Preparation – The Episcopal Church requires that couples planning to enter the covenant of marriage are properly prepared. At St. James, pre-marital preparation usually takes the form of several meetings with the officiating clergy to discuss topics such as family of origin, communication, and money. These meetings are tailored to the needs of each couple. A duly licensed mental health professional may also be consulted, particularly in cases involving re-marriage after a divorce. The rector will contact you to arrange an initial meeting once your deposit has been received in the parish office.

Planning the wedding – Couples wishing to be married at St. James need to give several months’ notice in order for pre-marital preparation and adequate planning to take place. Please contact the Rector to discuss the timing of your wedding before you make plans regarding the reception. Under no circumstances will a marriage be solemnized without at least thirty (30) days’ notice prior to the proposed date of the service for a first marriage, and sixty (60) days’ notice if it is a second marriage for one or both parties. This is to allow sufficient time for pre-marital preparation and any approvals which must be obtained from the Bishop.

It is important that the couple themselves, rather than a relative or friend, work with the Rector, the Parish Administrator, and Church Wedding Coordinator on the details of planning the marriage service.

It is expected that St. James’ clergy will preside at the wedding service. If you plan to ask clergy from outside St. James to participate, you must obtain the rector’s permission before doing so. If the rector approves the request, clergy who are not canonically resident or licensed to officiate in the Diocese of Vermont are required to obtain BOTH the permission of the Bishop to officiate, and the necessary civil authorization from the State of Vermont.

Weddings may be scheduled at any time of the year except during the seasons of Advent and Lent. Some flexibility may be possible if circumstances warrant, which will be considered in consultation with the rector, and on a case-by-case basis.

Additionally, the canons of the Episcopal Church require that:

- (a) that both parties have the right to marry according to the laws of the State and consent to do so freely, without fraud, coercion, mistake as to the identity of either, or mental reservation; and
- (b) that at least one of the parties is baptized.

Remarriage - If either party has been previously married and divorced, permission from the Bishop of Vermont is required for a remarriage to occur. Counseling must be completed no more than thirty (30) days prior to the intended wedding date. We will also require you to provide copies of your official divorce decree(s) to forward to the bishop in order to secure permission to solemnize the new marriage.

The Service – Marriages at St. James follow the liturgical pattern provided in *The Book of Common Prayer* or the “alternative” forms authorized by the Episcopal Church for trial use. You can expect to spend some time studying and discussing the service with the officiating clergy as part of the planning process, so details such as the Scripture reading(s) and sermon can be tailored to reflect your wishes to the extent that it is possible to do so.

Music – Music is an integral part of the service. It must be planned and approved by the officiant and St. James’ organist, Dr. James Lorenz. It is assumed that he will provide music for the service, and it is expected he will be compensated accordingly. These fees will not be waived unless he is unavailable, in which case they will be paid to whomever is contracted to play.

The organist will expect to meet with you several weeks prior to the wedding date to help plan your choices. He will normally coordinate and contract with any soloists or instrumental players, though any request along these lines must be discussed with him as early as possible. Please also note that extra fees will be required to secure the services of these additional musicians, and will be arranged and communicated to you by the organist.

Altar and Flowers – The St. James Altar Guild will prepare the altar with the appropriate linens and hangings (which are white). Please notify your florist that flowers may not be placed on the altar; they may be placed directly behind. There are no other restrictions on flowers inside or at the entrance of the church. Our wedding coordinator is happy to supply you with a list of local florists.

Photography – Please consult with the rector regarding photography. No flash photography or artificial lights may be used during the service as they pose a major distraction to both the

couple and the officiant. This applies to professional photographers as well as guests who may be taking pictures with cell phones or other devices.

Wedding Coordinator – Julie Groppe, St. James' wedding coordinator, will work with you throughout your planning process. Julie has knowledge of local wedding providers (photographers, florists, etc.) that she is happy to share.

Fees – Since weddings normally occur outside of the regular schedule of worship services, they require additional, compensated work time for the church staff members involved.

A deposit of \$500 is required upon submission of the marriage form to the Wedding Coordinator and parish office to hold your proposed date on the calendar. The balance of payment is expected at the wedding rehearsal, or before. The following fee schedule shall include the services of the organist, wedding coordinator, and sexton; the fee for the clergy, to be paid into the parish's discretionary account; and the use of the building for the wedding rehearsal and service.

Total fees:

Active Parishioner of St. James: \$750
Guest, with Rector as Officiant: \$2,000
Guest, with approved Visiting Clergy: \$1,500

Please note the following with respect to finances:

There may be additional fees for pre-marital counseling, especially if you choose to consult with a licensed mental health practitioner as part of that process.

Musicians, including St. James' organist, will expect additional compensation for playing beyond their contracted time. This includes music performed while waiting for a late arrival.

If the fee is beyond your ability, please discuss this with the Rector during your initial meeting.

PLEASE NOTE: St. James Church is 100% handicapped accessible. We can safely seat 175, not including the immediate wedding party.

St. James Episcopal Church
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Wedding Coordinator: Julie Groppe
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Parish Administrator: Sari White
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