Marriage
at St. James' Church

MARRIAGE

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

St. James' Church	212-774-4200
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Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another,
as God in Christ has forgiven you.
—Ephesians 4:32

NOTES

HOLY MATRIMONY

See what love the Father has given us,
that we should be called children of God.
— 1 John 3:1

It is our joy to welcome you as you consider St. James' Church for your wedding. We look forward to working with you to plan a service that expresses the joy of your relationship and reflects the love of Christ that will support your life together.

This guide will assist you in the process of planning your wedding. However, it is but one resource that will inform your choices, as you attend to the many matters and questions that can arise during this season of preparation. Please make notes and record questions as you read through this booklet. Our clergy and staff likewise will provide guidance to assist you in these intervening weeks and months of reflection and preparation for marriage.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God;
everyone who loves is born of God and knows God…
those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.
— 1 John 4:7, 16

BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters;
only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but
through love become servants to one another.
—Galatians 5:13

A wedding at St. James' celebrates Christian marriage and seeks God's blessing of a couple's life together. A Christian marriage bears witness to a belief that God through Jesus Christ will play an important role in a couple's marital relationship. Choosing Christian marriage implies a couple's dedication to the discipline of nurturing this sacred union and a conviction that marriage is a life-long covenant, undertaken through vows of love and faithfulness.

St. James' uses the traditional service of Holy Matrimony from the Episcopal Church's *Book of Common Prayer* (beginning on page 422). While the standard structure of the service is outlined therein, you may individualize your ceremony with a number of readings, prayers, music, and the celebration of Holy Eucharist.

The parish of St. James' is more than 200 years old. Architecturally neo-Gothic in style, the main sanctuary seats 900 people. The north (left) aisle of the sanctuary leads to the chapel, which accommodates sixty people. St. James' organ serves both main church and chapel, both of which are centrally heated and air-conditioned.

Saturdays are traditional and convenient for scheduling a wedding at St. James'. Depending on a couple's wishes and the availability of clergy and staff, other days also may be possible. Please note that weddings are ***not*** celebrated during Lent.

I pray that you may have the power…
to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,
so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
—Ephesians 3:18-19

PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other…
—Ecclesiastes 4:9

WHO CAN BE MARRIED AT ST. JAMES' CHURCH?

Couples considering marriage at St. James' must be members of the parish or in the process of establishing membership through regular attendance at worship services, participation in parish ministries, and fulfilling a financial commitment to the parish. Additionally, at least one of the two persons must be baptized. St. James' customarily requires at least ninety days' notice so that premarital preparation, including a marriage workshop and couples' counseling with the clergy, can be completed in a timely manner.

TO BEGIN THE PROCESS…

Interested couples may call the Administrative Assistant to the Rector to inquire if the desired date is available and to request an application form. Once an application has been completed and returned, a member of the clergy will be assigned to officiate and to equip the couple preparing for marriage. This assignment is made by rotation and clergy availability, except infrequently when a prior pastoral relationship exists with a priest on staff.

WHAT HAPPENS IN PRE-MARITAL PREPARATION?

Couples commit to participating in one mandatory Saturday workshop for engaged couples at St. James'. This workshop is offered twice a year. In addition, the couple meets with their assigned clergy member for counseling, over a series of meetings. These conversations with the clergy empower a couple to reflect on the complexity of declaring their love and life-long commitment, to deepen understanding of oneself and one's marital partner, and to develop a fuller comprehension of the sacrament of marriage. Pre-marital counseling provides an ideal opportunity for exploring essential issues in a neutral and confidential environment.

Topics of conversation in pre-marital counseling may include:

- Expectations of Christian marriage
- Experiencing marriage as a dimension of your spiritual life
- Family history
- Communication
- Financial and household management
- Planning the details of your wedding service

CAN DIVORCED PERSONS BE MARRIED AT ST. JAMES' CHURCH?

In short, yes. The Bishop of the Diocese of New York must first grant permission for remarriage following divorce. This practice upholds the Church's pastoral responsibility to help divorced persons examine the reasons for dissolution of a prior marriage. The officiating priest must see the divorce decree and the couple and the priest complete an application for permission that is sent to the Bishop of New York. This application is submitted near the conclusion of pre-marital counseling and must be received by the Bishop at least sixty days prior to the proposed wedding date. Permission customarily is granted.

Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm;
for love is as strong as death.
—Song of Solomon 8:6

THE MARRIAGE SERVICE

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious
or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist
on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;
it does not rejoice in wrongdoing,
but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things,
believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
—1 Corinthians 13:4-7

WHO CONDUCTS THE SERVICE?

No service of Holy Matrimony may be conducted at St. James' without one of the parish clergy officiating. Episcopal clergy, ministers from other Christian denominations, and ordained persons of non-Christian traditions may participate in the service when requested by a couple. The Rector of St. James' formally extends any such invitation to the other minister. For this reason, names, honorific titles, and addresses should be submitted to the officiating clergy person as soon as possible, to expedite the invitation process.

WHAT IS THE MARRIAGE SERVICE LIKE?

The liturgical framework for the Episcopal marriage service is referenced within "The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage" in the *Book of Common Prayer* (beginning on page 423). While some suggested Scripture readings appear on page 426, the clergy can provide you with a convenient booklet for referencing such readings as you plan your ceremony. The celebrant assists the couple in designing and selecting details to individualize their wedding with specific readings, lessons, inclusion of Holy Eucharist (Communion), and other such particulars.

The following details are arranged in consultation with the clergy and staff:

READINGS

The couple may choose from among suggested readings found in the *Book of Common Prayer* or the Scripture booklet furnished by the clergy. If different biblical readings are preferred, or if the couple desires the inclusion of a non-biblical reading, such selections will be chosen in consultation with the officiating priest.

MUSIC

Working in consultation with the couple, the Director of Music instructs and guides all musical decisions pertaining to the wedding. This includes selection of appropriate instrumental music, anthems, and hymns, as well as arranging for the organist or pianist, any additional instrumental musicians, and/or vocal soloists, with attention to honoring the ceremony as both an act of public worship and a particular celebration of love for two unique individuals.

FLOWERS

The St. James' approved florist *must* be used, as they are familiar with and adhere to our requirements and restrictions. The couple may wish to honor or memorialize family members or friends by dedicating their flowers in the service leaflet.

Floral possibilities include:

- two tall vases on the high altar and/or two vases on the chapel altar.
- arrangements in pavement candlestick holders near the high altar.
- pew decorations (bows, boughs, or blossoms), which may ***not*** be affixed with tape/nails.
- flowers/garlands on exterior stair railings; brass rails must first be wrapped with plastic and any such decorations must be removed *by the florist immediately after* the service.

CANDLES

Pew candles are available at: every pew, every other pew, or every third pew. The candlesticks are four feet tall without the candle.

PHOTOGRAPHY

The marriage service is a service of worship. St. James' policies regarding photography are designed to preserve the integrity of the service.

- Flash photography is acceptable ***only before*** *the start of the service*, as the wedding party enters the church, ***or after*** *the service*, as the party departs through the exit on Madison Avenue.
- Sanctuary and chancel may be photographed up to thirty minutes before the start of the service.
- Photographs of the wedding party in the church or at the altar may be taken either before or after the service.
- *During the service*, only time exposure (***non-flash***) photographs from a stationary camera in the *balcony/ gallery* (west end), a fixed location in the baptistry, or an inconspicuous spot *behind the congregation*, are allowed.
- Videotaping is permitted from the balcony/ gallery (west end) or from a fixed location in the baptistry, but with no additional lighting.
- Photographers must remain unobtrusive and cooperate with St. James' staff. The couple is responsible for advising photographers of these regulations. Such directives apply equally to all wedding party members and guests in the congregation.

SERVICE LEAFLET/PROGRAM

The couple designs and prints their own service leaflet. The officiating priest assists with content and layout suggestions. Additionally, the Administrative Assistant to the Rector can provide samples from other weddings for consultation.

WEDDING COORDINATORS/PLANNERS

Wedding coordinators normally do not participate in organizing the wedding ceremony itself. Staff and members of St. James' Wedding Guild support officiating clergy and the couple, at both the rehearsal and the wedding, handling technical and logistical matters in the church. Ancillary support a couple may choose to obtain through outside coordinators/planners must comply at all times with St. James' policies, as well as instructions from St. James' clergy and staff.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Marriage licenses must be secured by the couple not more than sixty days before the service. The license is issued by the City Clerk, whose office is located at One Centre Street in Manhattan. The telephone number is 212-669-2488. Both members of the couple must appear and furnish proof of age (18 years or older), including unexpired photo identification, such as an IDNYC card, a driver's license, a passport, or other original photo ID. No blood tests are required by New York State. A person previously married also must produce a divorce decree or annulment papers. The wedding license fee is payable directly to the City Clerk, by credit card or money order. Please confirm details prior to visiting the City Clerk at www.cityclerk.nyc.gov/html/marriage/license.shtml.

The marriage license must be given to the Administrative Assistant to the Rector at least one week prior to the wedding. Once the license has been signed by all appropriate parties, and after the marriage service, St. James' mails the completed paperwork to the City Clerk and forwards a copy to the couple for their records.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Alcoholic beverages are strictly forbidden on church premises, both prior to and after the wedding rehearsal and the marriage service.

Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
—Ephesians 4:1-3

FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS

I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete. 'This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.'
—John 15:11-12

CAN THE WEDDING PARTY DRESS AT ST. JAMES'?

Unfortunately, St. James' does not have a room where the wedding party can change. There is space where both parties and their attendants may freshen up and prepare for the procession.

IS THE CHURCH ACCESSIBLE TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

Yes, the sanctuary may be reached by elevator from the Parish House entrance on Madison Avenue. There is seating for those in wheelchairs at the front of the church and in locations throughout the sanctuary.

IS THERE SPACE FOR A RECEPTION AFTER THE SERVICE?

No, we do not host receptions at the parish following the service.

MAY LIMOUSINES PARK AT THE CHURCH?

While limousines may part in front of the church, the vehicle may not be running during the service and the car must be attended at all times.

MAY RICE BE THROWN OUTSIDE OR PETALS THROWN IN THE SANCTUARY?

St. James' does ***not*** permit anything to be thrown as the couple leaves the church, either indoors or outdoors. Such items are hazardous and require time-consuming clean-up for the staff.

MAY RUNNERS BE USED IN THE CHURCH?

St. James' does ***not*** permit the use of runners.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
— Galatians 5:22-23

ST. JAMES' CHURCH
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