**Information Regarding Marriages at St. James’ Church**

As you can imagine, many requests come for weddings to be performed in the historic “Red Church”, both from its own members and other active Christians. Less acceptable inquiries also come, even to the mistake of referring to St. James’ as a “wedding chapel.” We try to discourage such misunderstandings.

We ask both people to read the enclosed material NOW because you will need as much lead time as possible, or face disappointment. Should you desire to pursue your request further, please complete and return the following material to St. James’ Church which will begin the long process leading to the marriage you intend to have here. Setting of a date and development of plans **cannot** begin until these documents have been received:

1. Application for the Celebration & Blessing of a Marriage at St. James’ Episcopal Church.
2. Declaration of Intention for Christian Marriage.
3. Non-Liability Declaration Regarding Use of Rice and Confetti at Weddings at St. James’ Church.

It is entirely possible that upon reading this material you may both decide that your intentions for marriage are not the same as those required. Should this be the case, it is not necessary to notify the church. In any event, we wish you both well.

Enclosures:

1. Application for the Celebration & Blessing of a Marriage at St. James’ Episcopal Church.
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Policies Regarding Marriages at St. James’ Church

Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant in the presence of God between two persons who intend to enter into a lifelong relationship 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.

General Policies

1. Applicants must be serious Christians determined to obey Christ in their lives. This means that they shall affirm their agreement with the above statement and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with these principles.
2. At least one of the prospective mates must be a baptized Christian.
3. Keep in mind that Holy Matrimony is a sacramental rite of the Episcopal Church. As such, the wedding plans must conform to the liturgy for marriage found in the Book of Common Prayer. Any deviations from the liturgy will be discussed with the priest at least 30 days prior to the date of the ceremony.
4. Applicants will meet with the priest/representative at least four (4) times for premarital counseling of couples being married for the first time and six (6) hours for couples where one or both have experienced a prior divorce or annulment. Counseling will be done by clergy or counselors employed by the church or other persons who, in the sole opinion of the pastoral staff of the church, have appropriate training, experience, and spiritual understanding to provide such counseling.
5. Any applicant who has experienced a divorce or nullity of a prior marriage must provide proof of the legal termination of the prior marriage by way of a decree or judgment by a court of competent jurisdiction.
6. Marriages must be officiated by St. James’ clergy unless prior arrangements have been made with the Priest-In-Charge at St. James’ and must be agreed to by the Priest before counseling begins. Only duly ordained clergy of a nationally recognized church, which requires a period of discernment and education for clergy prior to ordination, shall officiate at marriage ceremonies conducted on church property. No person who has been “ordained” by mail, correspondence course, or over the internet shall be authorized to officiate.
7. Both applicants are urged to explore the use of professional premarital counseling from outside the church in addition to the discussions of Christian faith and/or marriage with the Priest of St. James’ or their chosen representative.
8. The clergy assigned by the church to implement the procedures contained in this Marriage Policy may, in his/her sole discretion, decline to make church facilities available for, and/or decline to officiate at, a ceremony when, in his/her judgment, there are significant concerns that one or both of the applicants may not be qualified to enter into the sacred bond of marriage for theological, doctrinal or legal reasons.

Rehearsal

A complete rehearsal is necessary and is normally set for the Thursday or Friday evening prior to the wedding although this can be changed for the convenience of the wedding party. It should occur before a rehearsal dinner or party. All participants and primary family members need to be present. The rehearsal time is approximately one hour, and it will begin on time. Bring the marriage license to be signed at the rehearsal.

Decorations in the Church

Decorations in the church must be approved by the priest and/or wedding coordinator. Please have the florist of your choice call the church office to discuss the flowers needed for the altar. It is the responsibility of the wedding party and/or family to remove flowers, decorations, and personal belongings.

Photographs

No photographs may be taken in the church during the ceremony except by the designated photographer or videographer, and then only at times agreed upon by the priest. The photographer or videographer shall not block the view of any person in the congregation, the musician, or person involved in the ceremony. The photographer or videographer may take photographs of the procession of the wedding party but must move to the side prior to their arrival before the celebrant.

In no case shall there be flash photography or video lighting used during the ceremony.

Formal photographs are normally taken immediately following the ceremony. It is recommended that, rather than making reception guests wait to greet the wedding party, some formal photographs be taken in the church an hour before the wedding.

Use of the Parish Hall

The Virginia Thiel Memorial Library may be used by the bridal party for dressing.

The Parish Hall should be left in the same condition as found. It is expected that everyone connected with the marriage party will use the facilities and grounds with respect.

If the Parish Hall is used for a reception, decorations are entirely up to you, although full removal and cleanup following the reception must be planned. The church’s pictures and banners may not be removed. They may, however, be covered. Normally, the evening before the marriage is the best time for decorating the Parish Hall.

No alcoholic beverages may be served in the buildings or on the grounds of St. James’ Episcopal Church. There are two exceptions; one bottle of champagne or wine for toasting by the bride and groom at the reception; and Communion wine used during the marriage ceremony.

*Rice or confetti may not be used in the buildings, or on or near the church property*. The bride and groom assume personal responsibility for enforcing this policy and have accepted any legal responsibilities if this policy is not enforced.

Church and Facility Fees

There is no charge to members for the use of the church. For nonmembers, the fee for use of the church is $350.

If St. James’ provides the pianist the fee is $250 payable to the pianist at rehearsal. Otherwise, the fee is between the wedding party and the pianist they have contacted.

It is customary to make a donation of $50 for the Altar Guild.

There is no “fee” for officiating at a wedding at the church. The wedding couple may wish to follow the custom of presenting the officiating clergy with an honorarium. The amount is always discretionary.

If the reception is to be held in the Parish Hall, the fee is $250 plus a refundable cleaning fee of $125. The wedding couple is responsible for providing their own catering.

Checks for any of the above, except the pianist, should be made out to St. James’ Episcopal Church and earmarked appropriately.