

SJEC Wedding Policy

Weddings at St. James' Cedartown

Holy Matrimony is a sacramental rite by which two persons are joined together in a lifelong union. The outward and visible signs in marriage include the couple themselves, rings, vows, and the congregation gathered to witness and bless the union. The inward and spiritual grace in marriage is the couple's covenant with each other and with God. At St. James' Cedartown, we delight in welcoming you to celebrate this sacred and solemn occasion in our church building. We promise to do all in our power not only to make your wedding a joyous event, but also to support you in your life in Christ.

Who may be married at St. James'?

Any two adults, although at least one must be a baptized Christian.

Must we be active members or formally affiliated?

No. We welcome everyone. Since a wedding is an event in the context of a faith community, we invite you to participate in our parish life and worship--before, during, and after the wedding liturgy itself.

We eloped and were married by a judge: what can we do now?

Those who were civilly married but now seek the church's blessing are also welcome. The rite differs in only a few technical details, and it can provide a time and place for appropriate religious celebration following a civil marriage.

One of us was married before: is that allowed?

Certainly. Although we hold the lifelong union as the ideal, we understand that not every relationship lasts forever. In cases of divorce, we will need proof of the dissolution of a previous marriage, *which we will submit to the bishop for permission to proceed*. We will also want to discuss the care of any minor children, as well as what you have learned from the experience.

Can St. James' say "no" to our wedding?

At their discretion, clergy may decide not to proceed with the solemnization of your relationship. This may be due to scheduling/logistical issues or other concerns.

Can we plan our service?

Certainly. As a parish of the Episcopal Church, we use the authorized texts of the *Book of Common Prayer*. These are quite flexible and allow for the couple to make numerous decisions. Your input is not simply welcome: it is actually necessary!

Who will lead the service?

St. James' clergy will officiate at all weddings in our church. In certain circumstances, other clergy may

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be invited to assist at the request of the couple, and with the permission of St. James' Rector/Priest-in-Charge. We welcome participation by ecumenical and interfaith clergy.

In general, we discourage close relatives who may be clergy from officiating. In our view, the father of the bride, for instance, needs to be fully attentive to that role, and not distracted by needing to preach or lead worship.

Can we have a “private” service?

No. Because weddings are services of worship, they are open to members of the parish and the general public.

How large is the church?

The sanctuary accommodates 80-100 persons in the pews.

Can we have rice, birdseed, flower petals, or anything else to throw?

No.

Can we have “Here Comes the Bride” at the procession?

We strongly advise against it. The bridal chorus “Treulich geführt” comes from the 1850 opera *Lohengrin* by the German composer Richard Wagner. Hollywood made it into a march played for the bride's entrance at many formal weddings. In the opera, however, the chorus is sung after the wedding, which is an immediate and total failure. In the context of the opera, the wedding occurs just before several guests are murdered. Is a song about murder and a failed marriage really what you want at your wedding?

What about other music?

Our Parish musician will be happy to help you plan. This person has the right of first refusal for playing all weddings held here, but additional musicians are always welcome. All texts sung must be approved for appropriateness by the Rector/Priest-in-Charge.

When can weddings happen?

These are individually scheduled in consultation with the couple. Weddings are not held during Lent, the forty-day period leading up to Easter. No announcement of the location or date can be made until confirmed by the parish clergy and administrator.

What about decorations and flowers?

As weddings are often held on Saturdays, flowers make a beautiful addition to our Sunday services, and you are encouraged to leave them. Payment for wedding flowers is your responsibility.

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We do not permit cloth runners in the church, for safety reasons. Any and all flowers and decorations must be approved well in advance. Items may not be taped or nailed to any part of the church.

How do we prepare?

The Episcopal Church requires pre-marital counseling, in order to help you establish a stronger and long-lasting relationship. Generally, this requires a number of hour-long sessions between the couple and the clergy. The intent of these meetings is twofold:

- To help promote a healthy life-long union, and
- To plan the details of the liturgy itself.

What about pictures?

Of course, pictures are welcome. Please avoid the use of flash or supplemental lighting or any other photographic techniques that could distract the congregation and the altar party. We ask that all professional photographers or videographers consult with the priest well before the wedding, to help ensure that they understand St. James' policies and expectations in this regard.

Should we have ushers?

In general, yes—and in addition to any groomsmen. You will also need to recruit readers for lessons and prayers as well as others to assist if there is to be Holy Communion.

Is Communion required?

While not a firm requirement, a celebration of the Holy Eucharist does place a wedding in the context of the most ancient rite of the church. We encourage it. “Eucharist” means thanksgiving, after all. Celebrating the Holy Eucharist—or Mass, or Holy Communion—allows you to make your gratitude to God for the love that brought you together explicit, and to share that in a sacramental way with those who attend the wedding.

Will we have a service leaflet?

It's up to you. Again, we strongly recommend it. Our Parish Administrator will be happy to assist with producing your service sheet. We ask that you provide the paper of your choice as well as your personally designed cover. The officiating priest will work closely with you to determine what to include in such a printed leaflet.

How much does a wedding cost?

There is no charge for this or any other sacramental rite. As a sign of God's love freely bestowed on all people, Holy Matrimony comes without a price tag.

Certain costs must be paid, however, including reasonable amounts for building use and the services of staff, musicians, and clergy. The building-use fee is waived for those currently supporting St. James'

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financially, including their immediate family. An invoice for such costs will be provided for you; we ask that you make payment in full at least thirty days prior to the scheduled date.

In addition, many people feel called to make a monetary donation in thanksgiving for their wedding. A donation to the discretionary fund of the parish is both welcome and appreciated—and fully tax-deductible. Make checks payable to “St. James’ Church,” enter “Discretionary Fund” in the memorandum line, and give your donation directly to the priest.

What about the license?

This you must arrange *well in advance*. If one of the parties is a resident of Georgia, the license can be issued in any county. If neither party is a resident of Georgia, the license must be issued in the county in which the marriage ceremony is to be performed.

The wedding license they issue is to be given to the Parish Administrator two weeks prior to your wedding. All formal papers will be signed at the wedding rehearsal, which is generally conducted the afternoon before the wedding itself.

Can we use the parish house for our reception?

Yes, certainly. There may be a fee for this, to help defray the costs of cleanup and utilities. The capacity of that space is about 45 persons. You will need to make your own arrangements for food, drink, and decorations. Once again, no decorations or signs that require making holes or using tape may be used.

You may serve wine, beer or champagne only if non-alcoholic beverages are also provided in an equally attractive and accessible fashion. It is incumbent upon you to be cognizant of safety issues with regard to wedding guests who will be drinking alcoholic beverages and driving vehicles later.

Any damage to church property by wedding guests or other participants is your financial responsibility, and will be billed to you directly.

How do I schedule a wedding?

When you are ready to commit to a specific date, the process is quite simple. In general, you should begin no later than six months prior to the wedding date, to allow sufficient time for preparation. Please contact our Parish Administrator to begin the process—or, better yet, come to church, worship with us, and check us out. *You are welcome here!*