



Wedding Customaries

St. James Santee Episcopal Church

McClellanville, So. Carolina

Our Warmest Congratulations to You on Your Engagement - what a wonderful time this will be for you! We celebrate your desire for a Christian marriage and look forward to walking beside you through your journey toward Holy Matrimony in the Episcopal Church.

We welcome your inquiry concerning marriage at St. James Santee Episcopal Church in McClellanville, SC. This brochure presents our policies and procedures for a wedding in the sacramental tradition. You are encouraged to read it carefully, and if you have questions you are invited to call the parish office at 843-887-4386 or to contact us by email at stjamesec@tds.net.

“A Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman, in the presence of God.” (**Book of Common Prayer**, p.422). The wedding ceremony is the liturgical and sacramental expression of that relationship. The wedding is a worship service of joy and thanksgiving which includes the public exchange of vows and the proclamation of God's blessing. The Book of Common Prayer states, "Marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God."

It is the intent of both the Prayer Book and the canons of the Church that marriages solemnized in the Church continue to be nurtured within the community of the Church. Marriage is not something that happens at one particular moment or something God is invited to attend; it is a lifelong process.

Those who come to the Church seeking God's blessing on their relationship should do so with an intention of maintaining an active participation in the life of the Church. While there may be extenuating circumstances, it should be considered normative that a marriage takes place where the couple intends to worship.

The Church's Laws Concerning Holy Matrimony

The Episcopal Church requires that at least one of the parties be a baptized Christian, that the ceremony be attested to by at least two witnesses, and that the marriage conform to the laws of the State and the canons of this Church.

At St. James Santee, it is customary that at least one of the parties be a member in good standing of this congregation for a period of at least one year prior to the request to be married at St. James Santee.

If an inactive member of St. James Santee, it is desirable that the bride or groom become regular in attendance. Children, grandchildren, and parents of active members may be married at St. James Santee provided they are or intend to become active in their local Episcopal Church. It is also possible that persons who have other family or historic ties with St. James Santee may also be married at St. James Santee Episcopal Church. All weddings are scheduled at the discretion of the vicar.

Before any couple can be married by an Episcopal priest or in an Episcopal church, they must sign the following declaration, which states the nature of a Christian marriage:

"We

and

**desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church,
do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife**

as it is set forth in The Book of Common Prayer.

We believe that the union of husband and wife, in heart, body and mind, is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their physical and spiritual nurture, and we do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God's help thereto."

Premarital Preparation

The Episcopal Church requires preparation for marriage, generally referred to as premarital or pre-nuptial counseling. Because the needs of individual couples will vary, the time required for premarital counseling would be adjusted to meet those needs. A minimum of three sessions, with both the bride and the groom present, is expected. In situations in which the bride and/or the groom are living out of town, it is usually possible to make arrangements for counseling to be done by an Episcopal priest elsewhere. Those arrangements need to be made as early as possible with the officiating priest. A written evaluation from the priest who has conducted the counseling will be needed. No announcement of the wedding should be made, nor invitations mailed, until final approval of the vicar.

Marriage After Divorce

Canon Law prohibits clergy from solemnizing the marriage of anyone who has been divorced, except with the consent of the bishop. The guidelines of St. James Santee establish the norm of one year from the date of the final decree of divorce for remarriage in the Church.

The Episcopal Church does bless third marriages after divorce. In this event, the customary practice is for the bride and groom to undergo the prenuptial preparation, as described above, and to undertake a civil marriage. Their union may be blessed in the Church at a later date.

In this diocese the bishop has requested 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.

The Marriage License

It is required that the parties wishing to marry comply with all the laws of the State of South Carolina. Such compliance is indicated to the officiating priest by the presentation of a marriage license. The license is issued by the County Marriage License Bureau located in the county office building. The license should be issued in the county where the bride resides. If both applicants are from out of state, the license must be issued in Charleston County. It is recommended that the marriage license be brought to the Church office the Sunday prior to the wedding. The priest cannot officiate without the license. The priest will sign and mail the license after the wedding.

Date & Time of the Wedding

A wedding at St. James Santee involves the participation of church staff and volunteers; therefore, adequate advance notice is essential. The couple will want to talk with a priest and make arrangements as far in advance as possible in order to reduce scheduling difficulties. Planning six months to a year in advance is the norm.

Weddings are customarily held on Fridays or Saturdays, with the time of the ceremony between 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. If there is more than one wedding in the church on a given date, they must be at least four hours apart. Dates and times are scheduled on a first-come first-served basis.

We do not schedule weddings on Sundays, during Lent and Holy Week except in extraordinary circumstances.

The Altar Guild

The Altar Guild is charged with the responsibility of assisting the officiating priest with all arrangements for the wedding. The Altar Guild will be present at both the rehearsal and the wedding to assist and support the wedding party and to insure the smooth flow of the service itself. A celebration of marriage is one of the sacramental rites of our church, and the service must be conducted according to the policies and procedures of the Episcopal Church; therefore, outside bridal consultants are not permitted to direct the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony. This assistance will be provided by a member of the Altar Guild. A wedding information form should be completed by the couple well in advance of the wedding date.

The Rehearsal

The purpose of the wedding rehearsal is to give the wedding party the opportunity to become familiar with the service ahead of time and its "choreography." This will enable them to be at ease during the worship service. The bride and groom will participate fully in the rehearsal which is to be held in the place where the wedding itself will take place.. The officiating priest, assisted by the Altar Guild, will be responsible for the actual conduct of the rehearsal.

Wedding rehearsals are normally held on the day before the wedding. Except in extremely unusual circumstances, rehearsals will not be scheduled to begin after 6 p.m. The rehearsal will take about an hour. The entire service, including ushering in of relatives and the entrance procession, will be rehearsed. Therefore, 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. In order to avoid possible delays, any rehearsal dinner should be scheduled for after the rehearsal.

The Marriage Service

Marriage is a sacramental rite of the Church and takes place in the context of worship. As in every service of the Church, the priest is charged by Canon Law with the final responsibility for determining the appropriateness of all arrangements and details.

The Clergy. All ceremonies at St. James Santee are conducted by our vicar or an Episcopal priest designated by the vicar. At the couple's request, the priest may invite an Episcopal priest from another parish, or diocese to perform or assist with the ceremony. The officiating priest must be notified of any desire to include other clergy. Clergy of other denominations may participate fully but not officiate at any service of St. James Santee Episcopal Church.

The Liturgy. The Episcopal Church is a liturgical church, and, as such, worship services are defined by The Book of Common Prayer.

The Communion. Since the marriage service is a worship service involving the whole congregation, a celebration of the Holy Eucharist may be included at the discretion of the bride and groom. When the Holy Eucharist is celebrated as a part of the marriage ceremony, all baptized Christians will be invited to share in this sacrament of unity.

Lay Eucharistic Ministers. Licensed Eucharistic ministers from St. James Santee or other parishes are welcome to assist. Requests for particular individuals to assist should be made to the officiating priest.

Readers. It is desirable that the Lessons from the Old Testament and the Epistles be read by family members or friends of the bride and groom. They may practice the readings at the rehearsal.

Acolytes. Family and friends who have been trained as acolytes are welcome to serve in this capacity. If St. James Santee acolytes serve for the couple, it is customary to make a small donation to them.

The Wedding Music

The bride and groom must contact one of our two Church Musicians for a music consultation at least six (6) to eight (8) weeks before the wedding. She or he will assist you in the selection of music for the organ, and congregational singing and can supply a list of additional instrumentalists, if desired.

It is customary for St. James Santee's Church Musicians to play at all weddings with music. There is a fee for services. Other organists and musicians may play with permission. However, they and their music selections must be approved by the Church Musicians and Vicar. In keeping with the understanding of the wedding as a sacramental rite of the Church, music selection is limited to sacred music. Music that does not have as its chief end the glorification and praise of God, including the melody from Wagner's *Lohengrin* known as the "Bridal Chorus," is not to be used and may best be left for the reception.

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. Extravagant decorations are not necessary to create an atmosphere of joy and celebration. Due to fire hazard, candles are not allowed in the windows. No stapling, nailing, gluing or attaching of decorations to the fabric of the church is allowed.

Flowers. At the Chapel of Ease (The Village) the only flowers permitted at a wedding are two vases of altar flowers. At the Brick Church, two vases may be used on the altar and arrangements may be placed on the window ledges. Couples are expected to provide their own flowers. The arrangements and flowers to be used must be coordinated with the Altar Guild. A florist may be used. The couple should contact the office for the name and number of the Altar Guild member who will be assisting as soon as a date is established with the clergy. The Altar Guild member will then go over all of the 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. (The color of the altar flowers is not restricted.) Pew markers may be supplied by a florist. Altar candles and ambo torches are the only candles used. Extra candelabra or unity candles are not customarily used at St. James.

Special Note about Brick Church. Brick Church is an irreplaceable colonial era church building . **We strongly encourage the use of battery-powered candles.**

Photography

While the Church is sensitive to the desire of the bride and groom 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 the bride, the groom 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 and until they leave, with the following exceptions:

- Flash pictures may be taken as the couple exits the Church.
- A stationary video camera may be set up in an unobtrusive place, 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. The time allowed for photographs is limited only by other plans associated with the wedding, such as the reception and the stamina of the wedding party. However, it is important to be aware of the following points:

Photography Sessions prior to the Wedding. It is an unreasonable hardship for the Altar Guild to arrive at the Church more than two hours before the wedding.

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.*

Receptions

The Parish House and Vestry are not available for wedding receptions at this time.

Dressing at the Church

Women in the wedding party may use the upstairs of the Parish House as dressing rooms for the wedding. The small building behind the Church (the Vestry) is available for the men in the wedding party .

Smoking or drinking of alcoholic beverages in these areas is not permitted. Someone in the wedding party should remove all personal belongings from these rooms immediately after the wedding and assure that these areas are picked up and left as they were found. The parish cannot be responsible for lost or stolen items.

Fees

Members in Good Standing - no charge for church building use. A donation as act of thanksgiving is suggested. A fee for cleaning may be requested

. A Member in Good Standing is defined as one

(1) whose Letter of Membership has been entered in the Parish Register, (2) who has been faithful in attendance and giving for at least one calendar year prior to the request to be married at St. James Santee..

All Others - \$1200 for the use of either Brick Church or the Chapel of Ease or 10% of total cost of wedding.

See the agreement form for other fees and honoraria. A very simple wedding at the altar (Chapel of Ease) with 5 or less witnesses may be performed for a very small cost. Fees may be waived under extreme pastoral circumstances. It is expected that all fees will be paid two weeks prior to the wedding. All expenses may be paid in a single check to St. James Santee Episcopal Church (excluding the rehearsal/damage deposit).

Miscellaneous Concerns

Rice, Confetti, Bird Seed & Bubbles. 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.

Special notes regarding Brick Church. Brick Church is not available for weddings the weekend following Easter Day. Please check your dates carefully. No exceptions. All paper, cans, bottles, trash and other debris must be removed by you. The house to the right of the Brick Church is a private residence. Please do not block the drive or request the use of the telephone or bathroom. As there is not a telephone in the church building, be sure to arrange for a working cell phone in the event of emergency.

To schedule an initial conversation about a wedding at St. James Santee Episcopal Church, please contact The Rev. Jennie C. Olbrych at 843-887-4386 or stjamesec@tds.net

Wedding Agreement Form

Wedding Date: _____ Time: _____ Rehearsal Date: _____ Time: _____

Bride's Full Name: _____

Phone Numbers: Work _____ Home _____ Cell _____

E-Mail Address _____

Home Address _____

Groom's Full Name: _____

Phone Numbers: Work _____ Home _____ Cell _____

E-Mail Address _____

Home Address _____

Additional Fee Information:

See Pg. 6 for Church Building Use fees

Fee for the Organist \$300.00

Use of Instrumentalists or Vocalists Additional fees in consultation with the Organist

Creation of Orders of Service for the Wedding by our Staff by special arrangement.

Clergy honoraria - As a sacrament of the Church, marriage is offered by the priest without charge. In thanksgiving for their marriage, and especially if extensive counseling or special arrangements have been made, many couples choose to make a gift to the clergy.

A DEPOSIT OF \$200 MUST ACCOMPANY THIS FORM IN ORDER FOR YOUR DATE TO BE HELD FOR YOU. (Made out to St. James Santee Episcopal Church).

This is in addition to the \$800 and also serves as a damage deposit. It is refundable, approximately two weeks after your wedding if there has been no damage to the Church building.

ALL FEES ARE DUE IN FULL TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE CEREMONY.

I HAVE READ THE ABOVE AGREEMENT AND AGREE TO ALL FEES.

Signature/Date

Mail to: St. James Santee Episcopal Church, PO Box 123, McClellanville, SC 29458