

Weddings

In the Episcopal Church, Holy Matrimony is a sacramental rite of the Church. It must, therefore, be entered into according to the standards of the Word of God revealed in Holy Scripture as lived out according to the practices of The Episcopal Church.

The Marriage

1. **Qualifications:** Persons desiring to be married in St. James African Episcopal Church must conform to the laws of the **STATE OF MARYLAND** respecting marriage. All persons receiving the blessing of Holy Matrimony are required to sign a declaration of intention, which outlines the basic Christian understanding of marriage.
2. **Membership:** One of the parties must be a baptized Christian. One must be a member of the parish. Exceptions to the rule about membership will only be granted for weighty cause as determined by the Rector.
3. **Scheduling:** Couples must complete the “Application for Holy Matrimony” located in the Narthex of the Church. Copies may also be obtained from the Church Office.
 - † Any couple desiring to be married must make this desire known to the Rector not less than **60 days prior** to the desired date of the marriage. For couples whose marriage involves remarriage because one or both of the parties are divorced, notice must be given not less than **90 days prior** to the desired date.
 - † No wedding ceremonies are conducted during the seasons of Advent, Lent, Holy Week, on Sundays, or other major Holy Days of the Church.
 - † **No date or time may be considered final until permission is received from the Rector.** It should be further understood that the Canons of the Episcopal Church allow any minister to decline to officiate at a wedding for good cause.
 - † Once the date as been secured by the Rector, the Parish Administrator will contact the Wedding Coordinator and the Altar Guild Warden when placing the date and time on the Church calendar. The sanctuary and St. Andrew’s Chapel are both reserved for the couple on that day.
4. **Pre-marriage preparation:**
 - † It is required that a couple desiring marriage must enter into a program of marriage preparation sponsored by the parish or approved by the Rector.
 - † The Wedding Coordinator will set up an initial meeting to plan the ceremony and provide information concerning Parish protocols. The couple will be given “The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage” planning packet, the Parish fee schedule, and the Book of Common Prayer (pages 423-438).
 - † A final procedural meeting with the Rector, couple, and Wedding Coordinator will be held one (1) week before the wedding. **No wedding will take place in the CHURCH if there has not been at least one (1) coordination meeting**

between the Rector, couple, and Wedding Coordinator one (1) month prior to the ceremony.

- † The marriage license and checks for all fees must be delivered to the parish office (1020 West Lafayette Avenue) no later than one (1) week prior to the date of the wedding.
 - † If programs or bulletins are desired, it is the responsibility of the couple to secure them for printing. The Rector must approve the content of the program or bulletin.
 - † The Parish does not provide alter flowers or an aisle runner. See “Floral Arrangements” for additional information.
 - † The Parish does have a Unity Candle stand and lighter for wedding use.
 - † When a rehearsal is necessary, one hour should be allowed. All members of the wedding party should be present promptly.
 - † It is required that the **WEDDING** party be present on the church grounds not later than one hour prior to the start of the ceremony. Arrangements can be made for earlier arrival for **WEDDING** party preparations.
 - † Paid security is required for a wedding, rehearsal, and reception held during the evening hours.
 - † Sexton services are also required for the wedding, rehearsal, and reception.
5. **Re-marriage after Divorce:** If one or both of the parties to a marriage have been divorced, the following additional guidelines apply:
- ✓ 90 days notice of desire to be married must be given.
 - ✓ The Rector must complete a preliminary assessment in order to form a preliminary judgment to be communicated to the Bishop.
 - ✓ If the priest's preliminary judgment is affirmative, final permission must be secured from the Bishop.
 - ✓ Documentation of the final decree of divorce must be shown to the priest and copied for submission to the Bishop.
 - ✓ Responsible continuing concern and care for former spouse and children of the previous marriage must be evidenced.
 - ✓ A period of one year should have elapsed from the date of the previous divorce.

General Information

1. **Parish Wedding Coordinator:** The Rector appoints a Parish Wedding Coordinator who represents the Office of the Rector and is responsible for the coordination of weddings in the Parish. The Coordinator works with the couple and/or their coordinator regarding details of the wedding ceremony if it is held on Church grounds or off site as the Rector directs. The Coordinator may also help facilitate planning for the reception.
2. **Facilities:** The parish facilities (Multi-Purpose Room, Guild Hall, etc.) are available for use for receptions and marriage-related activities, subject to the directives of the Property Committee of the Vestry.

- † The couple must complete the “Activities and Announcements” form designating the specific rooms for use. The sanctuary and St. Andrew’s Chapel are both automatically reserved for the couple on that day.
 - † See “Fees For Use of Facilities” for additional room use information and fee schedule for Sexton, Security, and required Church fees for members/non-members. It is the responsibility of the couple to insure the facilities used are returned to pre-wedding condition after use.
 - † Kitchen use must conform to the Parish guidelines. Wine, champagne or punches including them may be offered but no other alcoholic beverages may be dispensed or consumed on church property.. If wine or champagne is served, a non-alcoholic beverage must be served as well.
3. **Photographs and Reproductions:** The “Official Photographer” must make contact with the Wedding Coordinator prior to the ceremony’s start to insure Church protocols are followed.
- † The "Official Photographer" of the wedding is allowed to make flash photographs during the processional and recessional, and photos without a flash from the balcony and back of the church during the service. Additionally, the "Official Photographer" may take staged shots after the service.
 - † A video camera, without lighting, may be utilized during the ceremony. The service may likewise be audio recorded. The videographer must get directions on permissible locations to film from the officiating priest.
 - † Picture taking is allowed by the congregation only during the processional and recessional. No photographs are allowed during the actual service.
4. **Music:** The Parish Organist or his/her designee will serve as the organist if one is desired. If another person is desired, the person must be approved by the Parish Organist.
- † All music during the wedding must be religious in nature and orientation, consistent with the Christian faith. Secular (non-religious) music is not allowed.
 - † Any instrumental or additional choral participants must be coordinated through the organist at the expense of the couple.
 - † Recorded music can be used for any portion of the service. Use of the sound booth must be coordinated with the Tape Ministry.
 - † There is a fee for an organist for the service. If the couple desires the presence of the organist for the rehearsal there is an additional fee .
5. **Floral Arrangements:** The Parish does not provide altar flowers or an aisle runner. Floral arrangements (including other decorations of the church) must be coordinated through the parish Altar Guild, subject to the following:
- † Flowers and decorations must be in place no later than one hour prior to the ceremony.
 - † Altar flowers are to be arranged under the direction of the Altar Guild according to the standards of the Rector and the Guild.

- † Other floral decorations in the church must be simple in nature. Excessive floral displays, bridges, arches, etc. will not be permitted.
- † The use of screws, nails and wire will not be allowed except with special permission from the Altar Guild.
- † Artificial flowers are not allowed on the Altar. However, bridal flowers and the like may be of other than natural material.
- † Flower stands and equipment must be removed after the wedding.