



Saint James Episcopal Church

Greenfield, Massachusetts
The Rev. Heather J. Blais, Rector

Marriage Customary for Saint James

Introduction

First and foremost, congratulations on your engagement! We are delighted that you have expressed interest in celebrating the blessed occasion of your marriage at Saint James.

Below are the details of Saint James “customary” or guidelines for marriage. They may seem a bit daunting at first, but we hope that you will not find them unfriendly. Please remember that the Episcopal Church is bound by church laws and takes the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony very seriously. Whereas other Christian traditions may join couples with very few guidelines, the Episcopal Church does have guidelines that have been created for the spiritual benefit of all concerned.

Amidst these guidelines, there is room for creativity. We welcome conversations about what that might include. Together we will create a service that is holy, gracious and beautiful—one that expresses both the joy and solemnity of the occasion.

A marriage is at the least a legal occasion in that all marriages must conform to the laws of the state in which they are performed. It may also be a social occasion when family and friends gather together, and borrowing from a rich array of customs and traditions, join in celebrating the union.

If one, or both, of the persons being married is a committed Christian, a third dimension is added to the legal and social aspects. By choosing to be married inside the church the couple is making a statement of faith to all their family and friends, which in effect says, *“We are two people who desire to make a marriage covenant before God and in the presence of God’s people. In a service of worship we want to stand before God’s altar and commit ourselves to each other for the rest of our lives. We intend to live our married life in the community of the faithful (the Church). We are inviting the life and love of Jesus Christ to be at the center of our marriage. In order to make an appropriate beginning, we have come to this place to ask a priest in the name of God to bless our commitment and to ask the congregation to pray for us.”*

A Christian wedding is far more than a legal or social event; it is above all a service of worship. Indeed, it is a sacrament—an event whereby the grace and love of God is given and made known

through the words and actions of the people.

If you are interested in a marriage in the Episcopal Church at Saint James, please read through these guidelines.

Please note that if you are not interested in a marriage in the Episcopal Church led by the Rector, but instead, are simply in need of a space to host a marriage ceremony and/or reception, you may not use either the church or chapel. Instead, we would be happy to share our other spaces with you as a rental. We have a variety of spaces that may be used. Our Parish Hall, Whiteman Room, and Lawn may be used for religious and non-religious marriage ceremonies or receptions. If you are interested in renting one of our spaces for a marriage ceremony and/or reception, please contact our Parish Administrator at (413) 773-3925.

How to begin planning

All arrangements for your marriage at Saint James begin after your application is complete by making an appointment to see the Rector. Arrangements may not be made by parents or any other person. Please contact the Rector directly. Call the church office at (413) 773-3925 or email the Rector directly at heather.blais@gmail.com to make an appointment.

Important note: If you choose to book a reception date and time before meeting with the priest and the date is not available at Saint James, we will be unable to accommodate. Saint James cannot change any prescheduled events for weddings.

If you wish to have other clergy participate, please speak with the Rector as soon as possible.

If you would like to view the Church, we encourage you to visit us on Saturday evening or Sunday. Our worship schedule is as follows.

September-May

5:30 p.m. Saturday Service of Holy Eucharist in All Saints Chapel

8:00 a.m. Sunday Service of Holy Eucharist in All Saints Chapel

10:00 a.m. Sunday Service of Holy Eucharist with Music in Saint James Church

June, July, and August

5:30 p.m. Saturday Service of Holy Eucharist in All Saints Chapel

9:00 a.m. Sunday Service of Holy Eucharist in Saint James Church

If you are unable to visit on a Saturday Evening or Sunday, the Parish Administrator at Saint James is in the building Monday through Friday (8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.) and will be happy answer questions about the space for you. If these days are not possible, an appointment may also be made.

Requirements

Baptism

At least one of the persons to be married must have received the sacrament of Holy Baptism. The Episcopal Church accepts the baptism of any Christian tradition, which baptizes in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Membership

Because Christian Marriage is best lived out in the context of the community of faith, participation in the life of a Christian community is required. If the couple is not currently a part of a Christian community, now is the time to start. Being a member of a church entails regular participation and presence in worship and the life of the community, as well as making a pledge commitment of time, talent and treasure.

If the couple lives in the area, the Rector will discuss with them the steps to becoming members of Saint James. If the couple lives in another community, the Rector will help the couple to find a local Episcopal Church where they can become members. In these latter cases, the couple will most likely do their premarital work with the priest of that church, and spend two sessions with the Rector planning the ceremony itself. Before the ceremony, the priest at their home parish will write the Rector of Saint James, discussing the couple's involvement in the church, and the premarital counseling.

Premarital Counseling

Saint James requires that couples being married complete at least five counseling sessions of not less than one hour each with an Episcopal priest. These should be scheduled well in advance with the Rector. If you live a distance away, you may seek counseling at an Episcopal Church near you. An Episcopal priest must do the counseling, and send a written report of it to the Rector.

If the Rector of Saint James will be providing premarital counseling there is an additional \$100 fee, made payable to the Rector, paid at the beginning of the premarital counseling.

The purpose of these meetings is to try to prepare you for marriage. We discuss the joys and difficulties of married life, what each of the partners brings to the union and the specifics of the marriage service. Please make appointments directly with the Rector.

The Marriage Ceremony

The Marriage Ceremony and Wedding Vows

We offer three possible rites of the marriage ceremony. All three are available on our website: www.saintjamesgreenfield.org/marriage

- The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage (1979)
- The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage 2 (2015)
- The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage (2015)

While we do not permit couples to write their own vows, part of the premarital counseling will include writing a partnership prayer that will be used at the wedding.

Scripture Reading

Readings for the service come from the Holy Bible. The couple should work with the Rector to choose the actual selections from the recommended readings. The couple should also choose whom they would like to read these passages. It is quite appropriate for members of the family, the wedding party, or guests to participate. If there is a Gospel lesson, that will be read by a clergyperson. The version of the Bible used at Saint James is the New Revised Standard Version. Readers of lessons should prepare their readings in that translation.

One or more of the following passages from Holy Scripture may be used. If there is to be Communion, a passage from the Gospel always concludes the Readings.

Hebrew Bible

Genesis 1:26-28
Genesis 2:4-9, 15-24
Song of Solomon 2:10-13; 8:6-7
Tobit 8:5b-8 (*from the Apocrypha*)
Ruth 1:16-17
1 Samuel 18:1b, 3, 20:16-17, 42a
1 Samuel 18: 1-4
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
Song of Solomon 2:10-13, 8:6-7
Micah 4:1-4

Psalms

65
67
85:7-13
98
100
126
127
133
148
149:1-5

Epistles

1 Corinthians 13:1-13
1 Corinthians 12:31b-13:13
Ephesians 3:14-19
Ephesians 3:14-21
Colossians 3:12-17
1 John 3:18-24
1 John 4:7-16
1 John 4:17-16, 21
Romans 12:9-18
2 Corinthians 5:17-20
Galatians 5:14, 22-26

Gospel

Matthew 5:1-16
Matthew 5:13-16
Matthew 7:21, 24-29
Mark 10:6-9, 13-16
Mark 12:28-34
Luke 6:32-38
John 15:9-17
John 17:1-2, 18-26

Holy Communion

Holy Communion is the central event of Christian worship. It is a festive holy meal in which Christians celebrate Christ's love in their lives and come to the altar to be fed by his Body and Blood. Holy Communion, or Holy Eucharist, is the ideal context for the sacrament of marriage. When the service includes Communion, the couple, following the taking of vows, shares with the congregation the feast of God's love.

Music

Saint James organist(s), our Parish Musicians, will assist with music if available at the couple's desired time to be married. The service of other organists or other musicians may be used only with permission of our Parish Musicians. You may contact the Parish Musicians directly to make arrangements. Music at a wedding should reflect the liturgical and sacramental nature of the service. The organist will discuss your music choices with you. (Because the historical context of the familiar Wagner "Bridal Chorus" is not in harmony with the holiness of marriage and love, this piece is not an option.) A \$250 payment is required, made payable to the Parish Musicians. If the services of a soloist or other musicians are required, there will be additional fees.

Candles

The candles on the altar are lit during the wedding. Unity candles are not part of the Episcopal tradition. Unity is expressed through the giving and receiving of rings and may further be expressed by a celebration of the Holy Eucharist, if the couple so chooses.

Altar Flowers and Decorations *(Please share this information with your florist)*

It is appropriate to have two flower arrangements on the shelf behind the altar. They are a symbol of resurrection and new life. The Chancel furnishings may not be moved. Flowers or bows may be used to decorate the pews or mark family pews, but no tape or nails may be used.

Important Note: No rice or confetti may be used inside or outside the church. Flower petals, birdseed or bubbles may be used outside only.

Flowers may be left for the Sunday service after the wedding, or may be taken to the wedding reception. Please let the parish office know of your plans for your flowers. If the flowers are to remain for Sunday morning, the couple may request a dedication for the flowers in the weekly Sunday church bulletin (if so, the exact wording of the dedication must be given to the Parish Administrator no later than noon on the Tuesday before the Sunday of that bulletin – call (413) 773-3925). If the service falls during Advent, when no flowers are used on Sundays, then the family removes floral arrangements after the service and is welcome to take the flowers home.

Suitable Wedding Dates

Friday evenings or Saturdays are the preferred days for weddings. Other dates in the Church calendar when weddings are not performed at Saint James are during the 40 days of Lent, Thanksgiving weekend, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Other dates in the year may not be available due to previously scheduled parish events.

Wedding Day Schedule

In scheduling the hour of the wedding, please note that a wedding service takes about 30 minutes without Holy Communion, and about one hour with Holy Communion. This may be significant when figuring out the time of arrival at the place where the wedding reception is to be held.

Ushers and Attendants/ Witnesses should plan to be at the church, ready to play their important part in greeting and seating the guests, at least 30 minutes before the scheduled start of the wedding (60 minutes if they will be dressing at the Church.)

The Couple should also arrive 30 minutes before the wedding.

Concerning Alcohol or Other Intoxicants

Given the solemnity and magnitude of the commitment being made, it is of utmost importance that the judgment of everyone involved be unimpaired. The use of alcohol or other intoxicants prior to the service is strictly prohibited, and violation of this policy may result in cancellation of the ceremony, subject to the discretion of the Rector. It is the responsibility of the couple to communicate this policy to everyone participating in the ceremony. We appreciate your cooperation.

Seating

Saint James Church seats 250 people including the wedding party. All Saints Chapel seats 50 people including the wedding party.

Wedding Program

The church office does not provide printed programs. It is the couple's responsibility. Programs for a wedding ceremony are not required but can be helpful if a majority of guests are not familiar with the Episcopal liturgy. When a printed program is to be used, you must give a copy to the Rector for her review *well* before it goes to the printer.

Photography and Videography

Please tell your photographer and videographer that they must contact the Rector prior to the service. Please also inform them of these general guidelines which apply. Video and still pictures may be taken as the wedding party enters and leaves the church. No flash photography is allowed during the service. If the ushers notice wedding guests using flash photography, they will inform them that flash photography is not allowed during the service. The procession and recession may be videotaped from the space next to the pulpit. Other videotaping should be from the back of the aisle and/or choir loft. Since it is a short aisle, a zoom lens will give the videographer the shot s/he needs. Photographers should not move about during the service. We also recommend that you mention the restrictions on videography/photography in the wedding service program, if you have one.

Guest books

The guest book should not be in the church because guests will get seated far too slowly and the service is often delayed. The guest book is appropriate for the reception.

Dressing Arrangements

The classrooms in the lower level of the Parish Hall are available for dressing.

Parking

We have limited parking available at Saint James. There is parking along the streets and in the parking lot off of St. James Court. Please advise us if you wish a space reserved for the couple's car.

Ring Bearer or Flower Girl

If you have a ring bearer or flower girl and they are under the age of 4, they will need to process down the aisle with an adult in the wedding party with whom they feel safe.

Financial Considerations & Fees

We wholeheartedly believe that every aspect of a marriage is important, from the ceremony itself to the celebration that follows, which is in fact an extension of the joy, love and unity expressed in the ceremony. However, it is not uncommon these days for couples to spend significant time, energy and resources on wedding receptions, and less on the wedding ceremony itself. We encourage you to be intentional about all aspects of this special day.

Celebrant

In addition to the \$100 premarital counseling fee (see “Premarital Counseling”), there is a \$200 fee for the rehearsal and wedding ceremony, made payable to the Rector at the last session of premarital counseling.

Facility

Saint James Church and All Saints Chapel are available to active members of Saint James without charge, although a \$25 donation is encouraged to cover the additional time required to clean and prepare the sanctuary before and after the ceremony. Checks are made payable to Saint James, with “Building Use” written on the memo line.

Reception

The Parish Hall and Whiteman Room are available for a reception following the service, if not already booked for another event. If you are interested in one of these spaces for a reception, contact the Parish Administrator to check on availability and prices.

The Parish Administrator can recommend a variety of local caterers. It is expected that caterers will furnish all linens and serving pieces. Caterers are responsible for following the guidelines set forth in our rental agreement policy.

Marriage License and Canonical Requirements

Those being married at Saint James are required to fill out a Declaration of Intention (last page of this document) at least two months prior to the wedding date. The Declaration of Intention is an affirmation of a couple’s intention to live in a Christian covenant as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer.

The marriage license required by the State may be picked up at the Town Clerk’s Office.

Important Note: There will be no wedding service without a valid marriage license brought to the rehearsal.

You may need a copy of your marriage certificate once you are married. This can be obtained by contacting the Town Clerk’s Office that issued the license. (The certificate is a legal document. The Church does not handle the certificates and cannot send you a copy.)

Concerning Remarriage

In cases when one or both parties requesting marriage have had a prior marriage that ended in divorce or annulment, an “*Application for Permission to Officiate at the Re-Marriage of (a) Divorced Person(s)*” must be completed and sent to the Bishop along with a cover letter and short letters from each of the divorced persons for approval of the marriage by the Bishop. Copies of the divorce decree should be made available at the first session of premarital counseling. This application is located on the diocesan website: www.diocesewma.org. Once the Bishop has approved the marriage, a “*Permission to be Married by a Minister of this Church*” form will be completed by the Bishop along with a “*Remarriage Permission*” letter written by the Bishop and will be sent to the Rector.

While all of this may sound very formal and legalistic, the underlying concern is a pastoral concern that the issues which led to the dissolution of the previous marriage do not come back to haunt the newly married couple.

The Rector invites your further inquiry for clarification or additional information on this subject.

The Wedding Rehearsal

A rehearsal gives all involved the opportunity to practice, which will allow the wedding service to be carried out without undue stage fright and confusion.

Important note: The rehearsal is conducted at 5:00 p.m. on the evening before the wedding, unless other arrangements have been made.

The rehearsal will take no more than an hour. Persons needed for the rehearsal are the couple, the attendants or witnesses, ushers, readers, and parents of the couple if they are participating in the marriage service. The Rector will lead the rehearsal, as she is responsible for conducting the service itself.

It is important that all participants be present and ready for the rehearsal five minutes before the scheduled starting time. The rehearsal starts promptly at 5:00 p.m. and ends no later than 6:00 p.m. This is why it is so important to be on time—or early—for this event.

Be sure to bring your marriage license to the rehearsal. This is very important, so if you’re likely to forget, delegate this task to a trustworthy wedding attendant.

Final details

Please do not hesitate to call with any questions you may have. We will do our very best to answer your questions and to make your wedding day a joyous beginning for your marriage!

In Christ,

The Rev. Heather J. Blais
Rector of Saint James Greenfield

Now that you have read the above customary, in order to reserve your wedding date at Saint James, we require that you sign the attached Declaration of Intention form and mail it to the church as soon as possible, along with the informational form, also attached.

This will confirm that you meet the qualifications and intend to be married at Saint James. If you have any questions before signing and agreeing to what you have just read, please call us, and we will do our very best to answer your questions.

By signing this document you indicate that you understand and agree to these guidelines.

Adapted from the Marriage Customary at St. George's Episcopal Church (York Harbor, ME)

Informational Form
Saint James Episcopal Church
8 Church Street, Greenfield, Massachusetts 01301
(413) 773-3925 stjamesgfield@gmail.com,
www.saintjamesgreenfield.org

We have read the Marriage Customary for Saint James and agree to follow the policy as set forth.

Requested wedding date: _____ Requested wedding time: _____

Requested location is: _____ Saint James _____ Other (specify)

Our wedding service will include a Holy Communion: _____ Yes _____ No

The service will be performed by: _____ Saint James Clergy _____ Other (specify)

First Applicant:

- I have not been married before
- I have been divorced once
- I have been divorced more than once
- I am a widow

Second Applicant:

- I have not been married before
- I have been divorced once
- I have been divorced more than once
- I am a widower

First Applicant Information: (please print clearly or type)

Please keep Saint James updated on this information:

Name: _____

Birth date: _____ Birthplace: _____

Current Address: _____

Email address: _____

First Parent's Full Name & Address: _____

Second Parent's Full name and Address (if different): _____

Baptized: _____ Yes _____ No Confirmed as Episcopalian: _____ Yes _____ No

Church where Communicant: _____

Witness Name: _____

Second Applicant's Information: (please print clearly or type)

Please keep Saint James updated on this information:

Name: _____

Birth date: _____ Birthplace: _____

Current Address: _____

Email address: _____

First Parent's Full Name & Address: _____

Second Parent's Full name and Address (if different): _____

Baptized: _____ Yes _____ No Confirmed as Episcopalian: _____ Yes _____ No

Church where Communicant: _____

Witness Name: _____

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Declaration of Intention

According to the 2015 Episcopal Constitution & Canons (I.18.4)

We,

and

We understand the teaching of the church that God's purpose for our marriage is for our mutual joy, for the help and comfort we will give to each other in prosperity and adversity, and, when it is God's will, for the gift and heritage of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of God. We also understand that our marriage is to be unconditional, mutual, exclusive, faithful, and lifelong; and we engage to make the utmost effort to accept these gifts and fulfill these duties, with the help of God and the support of our community.

Signature of First Applicant

Signature of Second Applicant

Dated _____