



Weddings At St. James Episcopal Church



Your Guide to a Successful Celebration

St. James Episcopal Church, established in 1859, offers those wishing to be married a wedding site in a beautiful 19th century setting. The church is located in the heart of the historic gold rush town of Sonora, the county seat of Tuolumne County, California, which is situated in the Mother Lode at the foot of the Sierra Nevada range. This location is ideal for hosting out of town guests.

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Your Wedding and the Church

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL POLICES

The staff at St. James wants to help make your wedding a memorable and joyous occasion. We hope that the information provided in this booklet will be of assistance to you in planning your wedding day. If at any time you have questions you may call the parish secretary at 209-532-1580.

A wedding is a service of worship. In order to be married at St. James Episcopal Church the Priest-in-Charge must give permission.

Members are encouraged to hold their wedding service here. Consideration is also given for couples whose parents or grandparents are current active members of St. James. Nonmembers may arrange to be married here with the permission of the Priest-in-Charge.

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 enable those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God.

General Policies

1. Applicants must be 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 for couples being married for the first time and (6) times for couples where one or both have experienced a prior divorce or annulment. Counseling will be conducted 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 of 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.

Your Wedding and the Church (continued)

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, moral or legal reasons.





Your Wedding

The Date and Logistics



Setting the Date

The parish secretary can set your initial appointment with the Priest-in-Charge and advise you of the church's availability for the dates you are considering.

At the initial appointment, the necessary paperwork will be completed and the dates for the wedding and the rehearsal will be set and put on the church calendar. Canon law requires a minimum 30 days notice.

However, the Priest-in-Charge must grant permission for the ceremony for a date to be reserved. Until permission has been received and a date and time have been established, no plans should be made with other organizations or persons for other aspects of the ceremony.

If you are bringing your own pastor the Priest-in-Charge must approve the officiant.



Booking the Church

Reservations for the use of the church facilities for the wedding, rehearsal, and, when desired, a facility for dressing, reception using the parish hall and kitchen will be made through the parish secretary after approval of the Priest-in-Charge; a completed Facilities Use Request Form is required.

Weddings are normally scheduled between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. No more than one wedding will be scheduled on the same day.

Church capacity – not to exceed 120. The Choir loft is not available for seating. This is a historic building, so for safety reasons only the photographer and videographer will be allowed to enter the choir loft.



Reservation of the Facilities

Receptions are approved based on availability considering other church functions on the calendar.

Alcoholic beverages are restricted and may only be consumed at the time of the toast to the wedding couple.

No smoking is allowed anywhere in the buildings or on the grounds of St. James Episcopal Church.

The reception should not last longer than three hours.

The wedding couple will be responsible for cleanup.

Check with the parish secretary about alternate locations for your reception.



Prior to the Wedding Day

Marriage License, Remarriage & Instruction



Legal Documents

A marriage license must be obtained from one of the county clerk's offices in the state of California. Please contact one of these offices regarding fees and requirements. Your license should be brought to St. James no later than the rehearsal. This insures that all of the proper documents are completed at the church prior to your wedding.

The wedding couple and two witnesses are required to sign official documents before or after the ceremony. This includes the license and the church marriage register. At St. James this is usually done after the rehearsal, but please be certain not to leave the church following the wedding until this has been done. Immediately following the ceremony the state license will be signed by the Priest-in-Charge and a copy will be provided. The officiant is responsible for submitting the original license to the appropriate authorities.



Remarriage after Divorce

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.

The Bishop must give consent to the marriage under these circumstances.



Premarital Instruction

The Canons of the Episcopal Church require premarital instruction for couples planning to be married. After the initial appointment with the clergy, arrangements will be made with the appropriate parties to set up future counseling sessions.

Applicants will meet with the priest/representative at least four (4) times for premarital counseling for couples being married for the first time and (6) times 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.

The couple and the Priest-in-Charge choose the Scripture readings for the ceremony for couples planning to be married by the priest at St. James.



Wedding Day

Decorating the Church



The Decoration of the Church

St. James encourages simplicity of decoration.

The church will in no way be defaced. No nails or tape will be allowed in any way to affix anything to the structure or furnishings of the church outside or inside.

The flower girl/boy may strew flower petals as s/he processes down the aisle.

The throwing of rice, birdseed, confetti or releasing of balloons is not permitted inside or outside the church buildings.

If you are unsure about decoration for the church, check with the parish secretary.



Music

Please consult the music director before making any firm decisions about the music you would like. S/he and the Priest-in-Charge will determine the suitability of music suggested by the couple. Vocal soloists, other musicians or another pianist may participate with permission of the Priest-in-Charge and the music director.

Additional fees may be required to compensate for soloist rehearsals or extra consultations.



Flowers

You may use any florist you wish. The altar guild representative or parish secretary shall be advised of the florist's name. All arrangements, vases, and any window treatments must be approved.

St. James has two altar vases that are the only containers that may be used behind the altar rail. Your florist may already have liners for these vases. If not, or if they are not familiar with St. James, we suggest a visit be made to view the church. Flowers should not be higher or wider than the cross on the altar. Artificial flowers, bows, hearts etc. are not permitted on the altar.

Other flower arrangements may be placed in the main part of the church.

The florist should contact the altar guild representative or the parish secretary to schedule a time for delivering flowers and decorating.



Wedding Day

Decorating the Church and Rehearsal



Candles

The altar guild will place the candelabras on the altar. St. James has floor stand candelabras available if requested. Nothing may be attached to them. No other candles shall be placed on the altar or behind the rail.

Other candles may be used in the main part of the church with appropriate approvals.

Aisle Runner

Your florist may be able to provide an aisle runner. St. James does not provide one.

Dressing for the Wedding

St. James has limited space for dressing. If any members of the wedding party plan to dress at St. James, please notify the parish secretary.

Please make arrangements for the belongings of all attendants to be picked up before you leave the facility. The church cannot be responsible for any articles left at the church or in the dressing areas.



Photographer

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 make reception guests wait to greet the wedding party, some formal photographs be taken in the church an hour before the wedding.



The Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal is usually held the day before the wedding and includes the officiating clergy, the musicians, the parents, and the entire wedding party. A rehearsal is necessary to enable the participants to know in advance where they are to stand and what they are to do during the ceremony. The number of nonparticipants shall be kept to a minimum.

Rehearsal shall begin promptly at the hour selected. All participants should plan on meeting at the church 20 minutes prior to the time of the rehearsal.



Checklist

We want your day to be as relaxed as possible.

Use this checklist to assure that we have done everything to help you towards that goal.

Wedding Checklist

- Contact the parish secretary at 209-532-1580, as soon as you begin to plan for your wedding.
- Make arrangements for counseling sessions with the appropriate parties.
- Complete premarital counseling sessions.
- Discuss music selection with the music director 1 - 2 months before your wedding.
- Notify attendants of date and time for the wedding and the rehearsal. Remind them to be there 20 minutes before the rehearsal time.
- Obtain a marriage license and bring prior to, or to, the rehearsal.
- Submit the scripture reading selections to the parish secretary at least 5 days before your rehearsal.
- Have your florist contact the parish secretary or church's altar guild representative about floral arrangements.





Church and Facility Fees Chart



Wedding Fees

There is no charge to members for the use of the church.

Other Fees

Church - \$350 fee for nonmembers.

Pianist - \$100. If the music director obtains soloists or extra musicians, those costs are extra.

Altar Guild – It is customary to make a donation of \$50.

Clergy - There is no “fee” for officiating at a wedding at the church for members. The wedding couple may wish to follow the custom of presenting the officiating clergy with an honorarium. The amount is always discretionary. **Nonmembers** – The honorarium is \$150, payable to the officiating clergy.

Parish Hall – If the reception is to be held in the Parish Hall, the fee is \$200 which includes the kitchen and library, 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 and clergy, should be made out to St. James Episcopal Church and earmarked appropriately.

In order to reserve your wedding date, a deposit in the amount of \$150.00 must accompany the application. The balance of the monies will be due one month prior to the wedding.

