



WEDDING POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

- **We welcome couples of all genders.**
- **We welcome second marriages.**
- **We welcome interfaith marriages.**

The members of St. James United Church of Christ rejoice with you as you anticipate your wedding day. We know that love is what makes a family, and we are delighted to celebrate with you! We will work with you as you plan this important day and will help you in all ways possible to make it a beautiful and memorable experience. A wedding is a deeply personal event shared between two people, and it should be planned carefully to reflect your feelings. These policies and guidelines are designed to assist you in your preparation.

St. James UCC understands marriage as a covenant established between two equal and independent individuals who are seeking to commit their lives to each other and are seeking the blessing of God and that of the church.

We view wedding ceremonies within the context of these words that we proclaim during worship every Sunday: “No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you’re welcome here.” In keeping with our long legacy of inclusivity and social justice, St. James UCC proclaims equal rights (and rites) for all people. In accordance with our being an Open and Affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ and the laws of the State of New York, we welcome weddings for all couples, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

You are not required to be a member of St. James UCC in order to be married in our church.

The wedding ceremony is a religious service. The United Church of Christ is a mainline Protestant denomination. We are a progressive congregation. The base of the ceremony is that of the UCC, and the service allows for variation and flexibility. Prayers are offered and solemn vows are made. It is expected that those present, and most particularly all of the wedding party, will participate in the spirit of sincere worship. Because we see weddings as important religious services, anything that adds to the reverence of the occasion is proper and anything that detracts from the spiritual nature of the ceremony is discouraged.

WHO OFFICIATES?

It is the policy of our church that our Pastor, Rev. Paul Werner, is responsible for all services of worship, including weddings. We are glad to welcome clergy of other Christian churches and also from other religious traditions to participate in your wedding ceremony (at the Pastor's discretion). You should make such plans known at your first meeting with Rev. Werner. Proper etiquette in such a case is for our Pastor, as the host clergy person, to invite the other clergy to participate in the ceremony. Please note that he must approve of all requests for guest clergy participation.

Interfaith marriages are most welcome at St. James UCC. We are happy to work with couples who come from different faith traditions (for example, Christian and non-Christian), and we will help you create a ceremony that reflects and honors both traditions.

Our Pastor must be present at all wedding ceremonies in order to represent the church; however, a representative of St. James UCC will be present if Rev. Werner is unavailable.

THE CEREMONY

Please make arrangements early. Certain days may not be available, especially during Lent, Eastertide, Advent, and Christmastide.

FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

If you desire to decorate the church with flowers, we encourage you to do so in moderation. It will normally be open one hour before the ceremony for the delivery of flowers. Before the day of the wedding, florists are welcome to visit the building during Church Office hours if they so choose. After the ceremony, flowers may be taken by the wedding party or left for the church's use.

Pew ribbons, candelabras, and unity candles, if desired, must be provided by the couple. For safety reasons, an aisle runner is not permitted.

REHEARSAL

Very extremely simple weddings do not require a rehearsal. If the wedding party includes more than four people, it is absolutely necessary for a rehearsal prior to the wedding. This is for the purpose of going over the ceremony and finalizing details. The rehearsal will be held at a time mutually agreed upon by the Pastor and the wedding participants.

GUIDELINES FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS AND VIDEOGRAPHERS

The photographer is permitted to take flash pictures in the vestibule or the rear of the sanctuary during the procession and at the end of the ceremony. The photographer must stay behind the last pew that has someone seated in it. Respectfully done, taking pictures and video recording are allowed on the main floor of the sanctuary during the ceremony. Your official photographer and/or your official videographer may take pictures with the existing lighting from the balcony. Following the ceremony, the sanctuary is available for photographs. However, it is requested that pictures requiring the Pastor be taken first.

Please furnish to the church the name and address of your photographer and/or videographer at least one month prior to the ceremony. A copy of the church's guidelines for photographers and videographers is attached for you to provide to them. Note that photographers/videographers not following our guidelines will be prohibited from providing their services at future weddings at St. James UCC.

SCHEDULE OF FEES

Our Church Council has set the following schedule of fees for wedding ceremonies held at St. James UCC. Fees include the use of the sanctuary as well as the services of the church's staff. (If there is a soloist or other participant in the ceremony who is not a member of our staff, any fee for their services is the responsibility of the couple.)

\$550.00 • For weddings where either one of the couple or at least one of their parents is a **regularly active and participating member** of St. James UCC.

\$750.00 • For **all other weddings** at St. James UCC.

All fees should be paid in full on or before the rehearsal. A non-refundable deposit of \$50.00 is required of non-members when the wedding is booked.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

We are an environmentally conscious congregation and strive to be good and effective caretakers of God's creation. Please do not throw confetti or rice, and please do not release balloons. Smoking is not permitted anywhere in the church or on the church's grounds.

MUSIC

The Church Musician will play at all weddings where music is desired, and he will be happy to assist you in selecting music. As soon as you have confirmed a wedding date with our Pastor, please contact Jonathan Rizzo at 716-864-9175 or rizz7604@verizon.net to begin making your music arrangements.

The music used during the wedding ceremony should be chosen for its spiritual, musical, and aesthetic quality, and it should enhance the religious solemnity of the occasion. Music selections with primarily secular content or associations are to be avoided during the ceremony. (It should more tastefully be featured at the reception where its use would be appropriate.) The use of pre-recorded music to accompany vocalists must be suitable for a religious wedding ceremony.

Some couples utilize vocal or instrumental soloists in addition to the organ. While relatives or friends are welcome to serve as vocal or instrumental soloists, it is important to remember that performing well in a formal setting in a large sanctuary requires considerable training, skill, and prior experience. If you need assistance, an experienced soloist can usually be secured with adequate advance notice. If you prefer an instrumental solo, the Church Musician can play appropriate organ or piano solos to enhance the wedding ceremony. He can discuss this with you.

Music will be provided for 20 minutes before the ceremony and until everyone has been ushered out of the church at its conclusion.

The Pastor has final approval over all aspects of wedding ceremonies, including the music selections and soloists.



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