

# PLANNING FOR THE SACRAMENTAL RITE OF HOLY MATRIMONY AT ST. JAMES' CHURCH, HACKETTSTOWN

**The Rev. Dr. Cathy L. Deats, Rector**  
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Many individuals contact St. James' Church to inquire about Holy Matrimony. This letter, from the rector of this parish, is intended to help you understand our process. The requirements and guidelines for the celebration of Holy Matrimony at St. James' Church will be laid out for you. We will identify the next steps to be taken and invite you into this process. We very much hope that you, as a couple, will determine that you are comfortable with this understanding of Holy Matrimony, and that you will join us on a journey of discovery. As a general rule, this process cannot be completed thoroughly unless it is begun one year prior to the proposed date of the wedding. Under no circumstances can it be completed in less than six months.

The priests of the church are called to bless marriages in God's name and on behalf of the parish communities we are called to serve. It follows then that the first step in your preparation for marriage in the church should be a commitment on your part to participate in our parish community life at St. James' if you are not already doing so. Only after attending church can you begin the process for Holy Matrimony in the church. After a Sunday Service, we invite you to meet together with Cathy L. Deats, Rector of St. James', to schedule the first of your four or five pre-marital consultations with her. These meetings are designed to explore the meaning of the sacrament of marriage, your personal family history, and your relationship as a couple. This is seen as a time of developing a relationship between you and the parish priest.

At the first scheduled session, we will review the process for the Celebration of Holy Matrimony in the Episcopal Church. After this initial meeting, you may be given a "Fee Schedule" as well as an "Application Form" to schedule your wedding, Please carefully look over the "Fee Schedule". If there are any questions do not hesitate to call. After reviewing the "Application Form", we urge you to fill it out, and return it **promptly**. If the date and time are available, you will receive a written confirmation notice from the Parish Administrator and your wedding will be placed into the Parish Calendar. **Please do not** announce the date of your wedding until after you have received **written confirmation** from the Church Office. The **filing** of an application is not a guarantee for the date; you must wait for written confirmation, as your requested date or time may already be booked.

When you are ready to proceed, you will be given a standardized premarital inventory (PREPARE) to complete in the parish office at a mutually convenient time. The results of this inventory will form the basis for our discussions at the next two or three meetings. The topics covered by the instrument are ones important to the marriage relationship and include: family and friends, children and parenting, conflict resolution and spirituality. In addition to the priest / couple sessions, all couples are encouraged to attend an off-site marriage preparation workshop, commonly held in March or April, and led by the Rector and The Rev. James Warnke. Fr. Warnke and Dr. Deats are both

Licensed Clinical Social Workers who have led the premarital workshop in this diocese for the past five years.

The final meeting is scheduled about one month before the wedding date in order to complete the final planning for the service. There will also be a rehearsal, which is normally held the evening before the Wedding.

If you have further questions, or need additional information, please contact the Parish Administrator during office hours, Monday through Friday from 8:30 am through 12:30 pm. *Please remember that your wedding may only be scheduled by following the procedures noted above.* We also ask that you not ask us to make arrangements through a third party.

Finally, a marriage license must be obtained in accordance with the laws of the State of New Jersey. This license must be delivered to the Church office at least 24 hours in advance of your wedding ceremony. According to the Canons of the Episcopal Church, wedding ceremonies presided over by the priests of the church may not occur unless the marriage license is available before the wedding ceremony. Further information concerning marriage licenses is available through the Clerk of Courts Office in the Town of Hackettstown, or in the city offices of the municipality in which you live.

We very much hope that this will be a process of growth for you and that God will become known to you more fully as you prepare for your wedding day. Please know that you have the support of this community of faith and that your parish family cares very much for you. Your parish priest is also here to help you in this journey.

Yours in Christ,

Cathy L. Deats, Rector