



St. Stephen's Church

16 Elsmere Avenue

Delmar, NY 12054

518-439-3265

The Rev. Scott A. Garno, Rector

Holy Matrimony Guidelines

Welcome

We are so pleased that you wish to be married at St. Stephen's Church. We want your wedding to be a meaningful and happy occasion for you, your families and your guests.

The Book of Common Prayer (BCP, p. 422) tells us that “Christian Marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a **man** and a **woman** in the presence of God”. “The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation, and our Lord Jesus Christ adorned this manner of life by his presence and first miracle at a wedding in Cana, of Galilee. It signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church, and Holy Scripture commends it to be honored among all people” (BCP, p. 423). All arrangements for the celebration of holy matrimony at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church will be made to honor the sanctity of this sacramental rite.

The following guidelines are based on *The Book of Common Prayer* and customs created through experience at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. We hope that the guidelines will assist you in preparing for a prayerful and meaningful wedding celebration and that you will be able, with the help of the clergy and members of the parish to have a memorable experience of worship here at St. Stephen's Church. We have included details about many of our practices. If you have other questions, please feel free to discuss them with the Clergy.

Holy Matrimony at St. Stephen's Church

The Rector will oversee all weddings celebrated at St. Stephen's Church. The liturgy for the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage in *The Book of Common Prayer* (pages 423-432) includes scripture readings, prayers, and the exchange of vows. The service may also include a homily and celebration of Holy Communion, if so desired.

Those who intend to be married at St. Stephen's Church are subject to the following:

- At least one member of the couple (either the bride or groom) must be baptized and a member in good standing of St. Stephen's Parish.
- The authorized liturgies of the Church must be used from the 1979 Book of Common Prayer.
- A minimum of thirty (30) days notice of the marriage must be given as required by Canon Law, although, the parish would prefer several months notice to accomplish the pre-marriage courses and planning.

- If one or both, members of the couple have been previously married this must be discussed with the Rector during the first session. The Bishop will be included in the process of approving a second marriage. A period of one year after a divorce is finalized prior is required by the Church before the wedding can take place.
- Premarital counseling is required. This requires multiple sessions (over several months) with the Rector.

The First Steps

The first step is to make an appointment with the Rector who will approve all celebrations of holy matrimony at St. Stephen's Church. Both members of the couple should plan to attend. If the celebration of holy matrimony is approved to be held at St. Stephen's, a date will be arranged. While Canon Law of the church requires at least thirty (30) days, it is advisable to make arrangements for a wedding as far in advance as possible. An advance notice of at least six (6) months is advisable. Please do not assume that the church and/or the Clergy will be available for the date you have in mind. Please do not make any arrangements for your wedding until your wedding date has been approved by the Rector. Weddings are not scheduled for the following days: New Year's Day, from Ash Wednesday until after Easter Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. St. Stephen's Episcopal Church reserves the right to schedule multiple weddings on the same day.

Participation of other St. Stephen's Church Clergy should be discussed with the Rector during the first meeting.

Participation of Clergy from another church or denomination must be arranged with the Rector during the first meeting. It is protocol for the Rector to extend the invitation to the visiting Clergy.

If there is to be Holy Communion during the ceremony, you should tell the officiating Clergy the approximate number of persons invited to the wedding so the Altar Guild can plan for adequate amounts of Communion.

The couple should consult with St. Stephen's Church's Organist about music for the wedding approximately two to three months prior to the wedding.

If other instrumentalists or soloists are desired, this must be discussed with the Organist.

Two months prior to the wedding you should provide the Rector the following:

1. Name, address, and phone number for the florist, photographer, and videographer.
2. Name and address for each member of the wedding party including any readers, ushers, acolytes, and/or crucifers.

Each of these will receive a letter outlining guidelines prior to the wedding. You should also tell the Rector if Holy Communion will be part of the wedding ceremony, the approximate number of guests you will invite, and if you would like to use St. Stephen's Church facilities for your reception.

The Marriage License

You will have to obtain a marriage license from the State of New York. The Marriage License, along with a self-addressed stamped envelope, is to be brought to the rehearsal to be left in the possession of the member of the clergy officiating at the ceremony. The Marriage License will be signed by the bride, groom, and two witnesses at the conclusion of the rehearsal. The clergy person will sign and mail the license following the conclusion of the service of Holy Matrimony.

The Facilities at St. Stephen's Church

The nave (sanctuary) of St. Stephen's Church can accommodate approximately 200 guests.

Dressing room facilities can be made available for the bride and her attendants in the Parish Library. It is suggested that the women bring their dresses, shoes, etc. to the rehearsal. This provides time for dresses to hang and wrinkles to disappear. The groom and his party are encouraged to arrive at the Church dressed in their wedding attire. The groom and best man will wait for the start of the ceremony in the Clergy Sacristy of the Church.

Furniture or other items at St. Stephen's Church should not be moved except under the direction of the Rector.

Acolytes, Readers, Crucifers, and Communion Ushers

Acolytes are available through the parish and will be assigned by the Rector. If you have a parishioner you would like to serve please discuss this with the Rector.

It is appropriate for someone associated with the bride and groom to read scripture during the wedding ceremony. It is best if this person is accustomed to speaking in public on a regular basis. The reader(s) must be approved by the Rector and should plan on attending the rehearsal. If qualified readers are not available the Clergy will read the scripture.

Please consult with the Rector before asking an Acolyte or Crucifer from another church to serve at your wedding.

It is a nice gesture to give the Acolyte a small gift for giving his/her time to serve at your wedding. A cash gift of \$20 is appropriate. (See section on fees and donations).

If Holy Communion is served it is strongly recommended that ushers from St. Stephen's Church serve during this part of the service. Please discuss with the Rector.

The Wedding Party

It is advisable due to space constraints to limit the size of your wedding party. The suggested number for St. Stephen's Church is a maximum number of six female and six male attendants.

Children under the age of six are not advised in the wedding party at St. Stephen's Church.

Animals (other than service animals) are not permitted to attend the wedding or be included in the wedding in any way.

Please be prepared to inform the Rector how many pews will need to be reserved for family/special guests.

Flowers and Decorations

Holy Matrimony at St. Stephen's Church is a worship service and a sacramental rite, therefore flowers and decorations are those that are in keeping with the liturgy and customs of the Church.

Flowers in the nave are limited to those that will be placed at the foot of the Holy Table, or as previously authorized by the Rector.

Flowers that are carried or worn by the wedding party may be used.

Plants or flowers may be used in the narthex.

Outside floral door decorations, plants or flowers at the entrance to the Church can be used only if approval is given.

The traditional candles which are a part of the worship service at St. Stephen's Church are used during the wedding. These are the only candles which are used and are provided by the altar guild.

Examples of flowers or decorations which are not a part of our traditions include but are not limited to: flowers on the Holy Table itself, a unity candle, aisle cloths, scattered flower petals, rice, birdseed, or bubbles.

Unless special arrangements are made with the Director of the Altar Guild, the chancel flower arrangements are left for use in the Sunday service following the wedding. A dedication will be made in the Sunday Church Bulletin regarding the donation of these wedding flowers.

Music

Arrangements for the wedding music must be made with the Organist. If St. Stephen's Church's organ is to be used, then St. Stephen's organist is to be asked to play.

Should our Organist be unavailable, you must clear use of the organ with the organist and have approval for another organist, who must contact St. Stephen's Organist prior to any music selection.

Use of a musical instrument other than the organ must be approved by the Organist.

All music must be approved by the Organist and the Rector. The music must be sacred and appropriate for a worship service. The Organist can help you select authorized pieces and texts. No secular music may be played or sung as a part of the wedding ceremony. If used, the appropriate time for soloists to sing is after the mothers are seated and before the procession begins. The singing of the Lord's Prayer is not included as this is a corporate prayer said by the congregation during the service.

Photography and Videography

Your videographer and photographer should contact the Rector regarding the guidelines for photography at St. Stephen's Church. Furniture should not be moved for the ceremony, pictures, or videography except under the direction of the Rector and Wedding Coordinator.

Still Photography

Still photography of the wedding must be **unobtrusive**. The photographer will be allowed one hour before the ceremony for still photography whether inside or outside the Church.

If you desire any family members in the pre-wedding photographs, those persons should be at the Church 1 hour prior to the wedding.

Photography of the wedding party must end 30 minutes prior to the beginning of the ceremony.

The service begins with the Prelude and ends with the Postlude. Once the procession has begun, the photographer may not take pictures with a flash except to take a picture (from inside the doorway to the Nave) of the bride as she starts down the aisle. Once she has started down the aisle she and her escort are not permitted to turn and face the photographer.

During the ceremony absolutely **no flash** may be used.

After the ceremony, your photographer will be allowed reasonable time (approximately 30 minutes) for photography in the Nave. Time will start when all guests have been escorted outside and the doors to the Nave have been closed. Photo sessions following a service that includes Holy Communion will start only after the Altar Guild has cleared the Holy Table and Credence Table of all Eucharistic vessels. Time will be called when to cease all photography as the Altar and the Flower Guild must prepare the Church for Sunday services.

No photographs may be taken during the service by family, friends, guests or photographers other than the wedding photographer outlined above.

Videotaping

All videotaping must be done from the rear of the Church. No extra lights can be used. Video cameras are not permitted in any other location.

The videographer should bring a tripod and an extension cord if needed.

The Service Bulletin

Service Bulletins for your wedding can be provided by the bride and groom or an outside party, however, they must be submitted to the Rector no less than fifteen (15) days prior to the ceremony for approval.

If you would like a wedding program designed by St. Stephen's Church please discuss this request and have it approved by the Rector.

The Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal usually takes place the day before the wedding ceremony at an agree upon time.

The rehearsal will last approximately one hour. Please plan at least two (2) hours between the starting time of the rehearsal and the starting time of your rehearsal dinner.

All members of the bridal party, including children, are expected to participate in the rehearsal. Please ask everyone to be on time, appropriately dressed and ready to begin at the appointed hour.

Rehearsals are for reviewing and practicing how the wedding was planned, not for planning the wedding itself. Decisions will have been made prior to this time with the Rector and the Coordinator. The use of a “substitute bride” during the rehearsal is not a part of Episcopal tradition.

The Rector or officiating Clergy will be in charge of the rehearsal. Outside bridal consultants are not permitted to have a role in the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony.

The possession or use of alcohol/illegal drugs is not permitted on church property. In addition, members of the wedding party must not arrive at St. Stephen's Church for the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony under the influence of alcohol/illegal drugs.

The primary role of the Clergy is in premarital counseling, the rehearsal, and the wedding ceremony. Appearances at after rehearsal parties and receptions are secondary and possible only if family, parish and pastoral duties allow. Therefore, please do not wait for the Rector or other Clergy to arrive before starting these social functions unless prior arrangements have been made.

The Wedding Day

The Wedding Coordinator will determine the arrival time for all the wedding participants. This includes the arrival time for the photographer/videographer.

If your wedding is scheduled near the time of a meal you might want to provide some simple snacks and drinks for your wedding party. (This is something a friend could do.) Suggested snacks are cheese, crackers, and fruit that are easily eaten out of hand. Bottled water is the drink of choice as if it is spilled; the spot can be dried and will be almost invisible.

Inform all family members who are to be in pictures prior to the wedding of the designated time to be at the church.

Those guests who are to be seated in the reserved pews, except mothers and grandmothers, should be seated fifteen (15) minutes prior to the beginning of the ceremony.

Inform all family members/friends and the wedding party who are to be in pictures after the wedding to be readily available immediately after the ceremony. There is not time to search for these participants.

Weddings at St. Stephen's Church start on time. There will be no delays for seating of guests who arrive late.

Fees and Donations

St. Stephen's Church charges no fees for the use of facilities, however a donation would be accepted.

The following charges for services do apply:

Sexton (Janitorial services) \$50.00

Administrative (Bulletins) \$20.00

Organist \$150.00 (with soloists \$200.00)

The above fees may be included in one check made payable to “St. Stephen's Church”.

Acolyte and Crucifer (see section on Acolytes) \$20.00
(Place in an envelope marked for the acolyte or crucifer)

Clergy – It is customary to give a thank offering to the Officiating Clergy for the time involved in consultation, counseling, rehearsal and the wedding. The suggested minimum is \$200.00. A separate check should be made out to the name of the Officiating Clergy.

All these fees/offerings and the marriage license are due at the rehearsal.

Liability

Any damage to the Church premises, furniture, or furnishings by the florist, the photographer, videographer, caterer, wedding party, family or guests shall be repaired at the expense of the couple, their families or the wedding party. The repairs will be made at the discretion of the Rector.

St. Stephen's Church is not responsible for loss of, or damage to any personal items brought to the church. The couple and their families agree to indemnify St. Stephen's Church for any such loss or damage for which St. Stephen's may be found liable.

Remarriage

If either member of the couple has gone through the process of a divorce, the Diocesan Bishop must be notified with a written statement explaining the reasons behind the divorce, and a period of at least one year must have past since the divorce. If the divorce occurred for reasons other than a biblical nature it is at the discretion of the clergy (Bishop and Rector) to decide if the remarriage of the individuals will be permitted or if further counseling and dialog need to take place.

Cohabitation

We believe that sexual intimacy is a gift given to us by God only to be enjoyed within the Bonds of Holy Matrimony. Therefore, couples seeking to be married at St. Stephen's Church that are currently cohabitating will be asked to sign a statement vowing they will refrain from sexual intimacy for at least 6 months prior to their wedding date. This statement is to be taken seriously and as an oath to one another and to God. Failure to sign the oath may mean that the wedding cannot be celebrated at St. Stephen's Church.

Same-sex Unions

St. Stephen's, per the Constitution and Canons of the Albany Diocese, the pastoral direction and teaching of our Bishop, and in agreement with the Diocese, does not permit or celebrate same-sex unions.

Contact Information

All contact should be made through the church office at 518-439-3265, or by email

Rector

The Reverend Scott A. Garno

frscottgarno@gmail.com

Church Office

Ms. Gail Truchard, Administrative Assistant

ststephensdelmar@gmail.com

Deacon

The Venerable Harvey Huth

Deacon

The Reverend Justine Guernsey

Deacon (Retired)

The Reverend Dr. Robert Heighton

Organist

Ms. Helen Hamel

pianomuse@outlook.com

The Clergy, Staff, and Lay Volunteers are delighted to help you as you plan for this important event. Please let us know if you have further questions.

The *Book of Common Prayer* states that “Holy Matrimony is Christian Marriage, in which the woman and man enter into a life-long union, make their vows before God and the Church, and receive the grace and blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows.”
(BCP p. 861)

May God’s grace and blessing be with you as you prepare to make your wedding vows!

Signature of Rector _____ *Date* _____

Signatures of Bride _____ *Date* _____

Signature of Groom _____ *Date* _____