*Weddings*

At St. Matthew’s Church

87 Narragansett Avenue

Jamestown, Rhode Island

Revised September 2022

The Sacrament of Marriage

St. Matthew’s Church,

Jamestown, Rhode Island

*Dearly beloved: We have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of these two people in Holy Matrimony. 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 the Church, and Holy Scripture commends it to be honored among all people. (Book of Common Prayer, p. 423)*

Congratulations on your engagement! St. Matthew’s is a parish of the Episcopal Church, which considers holy matrimony a sacramental rite, not just a ceremonial or legal formality but a way to receive God’s blessing upon your marriage. It is a religious service, and it is the most important part of your wedding day. Our hope is that your wedding preparation and service will be spiritually meaningful to you, so that your vows, made in the presence of God and those you love and love you, will be written on your hearts for a lifetime.

We hope the following materials will answer your questions.

Please contact our Parish Administrator to set up a meeting with our priest as the first step to having your wedding at St. Matthew’s Church.

**Contact Information**

Dale Caswell, Parish Administrator: st.matt@necoxmail.com

Church Office : 401-423-1762

The Rev’d Christa Moore-Levesque, Rector: stmattrector@gmail.com

Who marries at St. Matthew’s?

All are welcome!

Our main requirement is that at least one of you is a baptized Christian. We often work with couples who are from different faith traditions.

We like for couples to have some connection to the church. Membership helps couples get to know the clergy and church community, and provides support for life’s spiritual journey. We encourage membership, and we think it is well worth your commitment, but we do not require it.

Getting Started

Your first step is to contact our Parish Administrator, Dale Caswell, to discuss having your wedding at St. Matthew’s. Dale will go over the process and clarify next steps, and provide you with a wedding form that will need to be completed and returned. The next step is to meet with our Priest, Reverend Christa Moore-Levesque. Please do not make any plans (like ordering invitations) until you have met or spoken with Christa and received confirmation of the date.

Pre-Marital Preparation

The Episcopal Church requires couples to participate in pre-marital preparation with a priest or counselor. Christa is available to provide pre-marital counseling. We assume that, having decided to marry, you have talked with each other about your expectations, hopes, and dreams. The pre-marital counseling is intended to help clarify those expectations and identify the areas of challenge as well as strengths brought to the marriage. The counseling usually consists of three to four sessions, with the final session focused on planning the details of the service. To help you work out concerns and/or build problem-solving skills that will help you establish a strong marriage, you may be asked to meet with other counseling professionals.

If a couple resides far from Jamestown, they may, with Christa’s consent, receive pre-marital counseling from a counselor or priest near their home. Christa is also very comfortable with conducting pre-marital counseling sessions via Zoom. Should you prefer to have another counselor do the preparations, we will need to receive a report on the counseling at least one month before the wedding.

Marriage After Divorce

Marriage is intended to be a lifelong commitment. No one goes into marriage planning to divorce, but we are imperfect people living in an imperfect world. To build a strong foundation for a new marriage, the issues that brought about the ending of any previous marriage must be examined thoughtfully.

Our priest will explore these issues with the couple in pre-marital counseling. If satisfied that the couple is ready for marriage, Christa will seek permission from the Bishop of the Diocese of Rhode Island that she may officiate the wedding. The request to the Bishop must be made at least 30 days before the wedding. It must include a summary of the completed counseling, and an assurance that we have copies of all pertinent divorce decrees.

The Service

At St. Matthew’s, we use the worship materials of the Episcopal Church. “The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage,” which starts on page 423 of the Book of Common Prayer, is the primary marriage service text. (You can find the text online at BCPonline.org, under “Pastoral Offices”). Couples may opt for updated rites authorized by The Episcopal Church, which avoid heteronormative language. The service is traditional, but it is flexible enough to be able to reflect the personalities of any couple! In general, most weddings take around 20 minutes. If there is Eucharist the wedding could take up to an hour and a half.

Including the Holy Eucharist (or communion) in conjunction with the wedding, is always appropriate and can be a beautiful beginning to a couple’s new life together. It is our policy to invite all who come in faith to receive communion.

The Book of Common Prayer includes suggestions for Scripture readings. Readings from the Old or New Testament and a Reading from the Gospel are customarily included. You may select other readings as well, like poetry, secular texts, or song lyrics. The inclusion of these is pending the priest’s approval.

Officiant

You are welcome to have your own officiant perform the service if they are a priest in the Episcopal Church. If they are not ordained in the Episcopal Church, Christa will have to speak with the officiant before giving approval. In the case of having your own officiant, either your officiant or Christa could conduct your pre-marital counseling sessions.

Programs

We are happy to print your service programs. You may also have them printed professionally, if you so choose. Please do not print anything until the details have been confirmed by Christa.

Music

If you wish to have our organist play, as soon as your wedding date has been confirmed, we will arrange for you to meet with her to explore what you would like for your service. She will have suggested pieces and can play them for you. If you wish to have outside musicians please provide us with the music selections and who the musicians are as Christa’s approval will be required.

If you would like to hire our Organist the fee is $800. This fee includes first meeting, rehearsal and wedding. You will be responsible for additional musician fees and to pay the fees directly to those musicians.

What Music Will We Need?

Prelude: Played while the guests and most family members are seated.

Processional: Played while the attendants make their entrance.

Bridal/Couple Processional: Played when the bride or couple and other members of the wedding party make their entrance.

Recessional: Played when the newly-married couple walks down the aisle.

We also recommend adding a short piece of music between the readings to slow things down a bit. Even a short piece will let you catch your breath and take in what’s happening so you can remember it forever!

If you would like to sing hymns, keep in mind how many of your guests are likely to come from traditions that know and sing hymns. We suggest hymns that are well known so that a joyful, enthusiastic rendering will complement your service.

Flowers

The beauty, fragrance, and texture of flowers at a wedding symbolize God’s creation and love, and the abundance of God’s blessing upon the couple. Please have your florist submit their plan to Dale for review approximately 30 days before the wedding. (This is to prevent disasters like balloon arches or arrangements that don’t fit the space, and to be sure we know when they are coming to deliver flowers.)

Please note: if you put wreaths or other hanging flowers or greens outside, you must take them with you, or arrange for your florist to take them. We cannot remove them safely before our services on Sunday. Please note that florists must bring their own over-door hangers.

Photography

We know that your photos will help you remember your wedding day forever, so we try to be flexible with your photographers. However, the photographing, video recording, and/or audio recording of the service may not interfere with the tone and movement of the service. The center aisle of the church must be clear of all photographic or video equipment at all times. Photographers need to limit their movements so as not to be distracting to the guests or wedding party, and use available light – no flashes during the service. We are happy to reenact portions of the service afterward if your photographer needs to use a flash.

Before the start of the wedding ceremony, the clergy will ask guests to turn their phones off and put them away. Your guests will miss what is happening if they are watching it through their phone screens.

Rehearsal

The rehearsal is held at 4:00 p.m. the day before the wedding. All members of the wedding party and any readers should be there. The rehearsal will take an about an hour, but will not start until everyone is present. If you have a professional wedding planner, this is the time when he/she can coordinate with the couple, clergy, and Dale on any details and expectations for the wedding day. Christa, or your officiant, will run the rehearsal.

The Church Building

St. Matthew’s in located in the center of the charming village in Jamestown, RI.

Our address is:

St. Matthew’s Church

87 Narragansett Avenue

Jamestown, RI 02835

Capacity: St. Matthew’s seats 250 people

Air Conditioning: Our church space is air conditioned and comfortable in the summer months.

Parking: We have about 50 parking places in our private lot, the lot behind Town Hall, and immediately in front and behind the church. There is ample street parking on Narragansett Avenue and West Street.

Accessibility: The church’s main entrance off of Narragansett Avenue is wheelchair accessible.

Restrooms: There are two accessible restrooms on the main level of our Parish Hall.

Your Wedding Day

Because we have limited space, the wedding parties may wish to arrive dressed.

Our Parish Hall can be a gathering area for the wedding party or families prior to the wedding.

Plan to arrive at least 30 minutes before the wedding – more if you are having pictures taken before the service. You can easily be sequestered from your spouse-to-be before the service if that is what you prefer.

We want your wedding to be joyful with no unhappy surprises. So, for safety, no loose rose petals, rice, confetti, or bubbles may be used (indoors or outdoors). Fireworks of any kind are expressly forbidden.

Please be sure that your florists, caterers, photographers and videographers have coordinated with the Parish Administrator as to when they will be arriving so the church will be open and staff will be there.

Fees

For the use of the church: Check payable to St. Matthew’s Church

Non-members: $3,000

Members: No charge\*

\*There are some fees that are reduced or waived for Parish members. A Parish member is someone who has been attending St. Matthew’s regularly and has fulfilled a financial pledge in the last year and is involved in the life of the congregation.

Church Coordinator: Check payable to: Dale Caswell for $350.

Organist: Check payable to: Diana Mukusheva for $800.

Sexton (custodian): check payable to: St. Matthew’s for $300.

Clergy: Check payable to: Christa Moore-Levesque

Non-members: $600

Members: A suitable donation to Rector’s discretionary fund is requested but not required

Please note that all fees are due 30 days before the wedding.

Wedding Forms

After you communicate with the Church Coordinator, please fill out the Wedding Information Form that you receive, or that is posted on our website. We need this information for our parish records and to help you track some of the details of the service as we get closer. The application will include a “Declaration of Intention,” which our church laws require, but which is also a good opportunity to discuss the concept of “Christian marriage” with your officiating clergy. The clergy member working with you will ask you to sign it at one of your pre-marital counseling meetings.

We are delighted that you are considering St. Matthew’s for your wedding! If you have any questions please contact our Church Coordinator.

May God bless you as you prepare to be wed!