

Guidelines for Weddings at Westover Episcopal Church

*“The Episcopal Church requires that one, at least, of the parties must be a baptized Christian; that the ceremony be attested by at least two witnesses; and that the marriage conform to the laws of the State and the canons of this Church.
(The Book of Common Prayer, p. 422)*

Congratulations on your plans to be married. We pray that this time of preparation is joyful and meaningful. The celebration and blessing of a marriage is a sacred occasion. We hope that these guidelines will offer you a clear understanding of our procedures and insight into what a wedding ceremony at Westover Episcopal Church entails.

Marriage is a solemn public covenant between two people in the presence of God and the faith community. Choosing to enter a lifetime commitment is an important and joyous occasion. It is also a time for prayer, planning, preparation, and growth. In the wedding ceremony, two people promise in God's name to be faithful to each other for life. The congregation commits to support the couple and prays that God will strengthen and guide them in their life together. The sacred nature of the service and the solemnity of the promises made by the couple influence the decisions to be made about the wedding. Christian marriage is a covenant that is made out of the Christian commitment of the two people within the context of the life of the congregation and the whole Church. **Thus, the service of Christian marriage requires:**

1. At least one member of the couple has been baptized, and;
2. At least one member of the couple is an “active member” of Westover's Church family.

Please note: Active members are those who have had their membership with our church for at least six months, are faithful in attending worship, and are actively involved in and contributing to the life of the parish. Exceptions are made for individuals who have been raised in this church, moved away, and wish to return to be married here.

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage

All weddings use *The 1979 Book of Common Prayer* and are in accordance with the canons of the Episcopal Church. Music is an integral part of the wedding ceremony. A marriage service in the Episcopal Church is a worship service, and the music selected for the ceremony should reflect the sacred and joyful nature of the service and enhance the beauty of the wedding liturgy. The organist consults with the wedding couple to select music for the service: the processional, hymns, recessional, and any vocal solos or instrumental pieces. At this consultation, the organist suggests several appropriate

choices from which the couple may choose. The organist is happy to consider special requests.

Marriage of Divorced Persons

The Episcopal Church does allow remarriage of divorced persons, but strict guidelines according to the Canons of the church must be followed. The process takes time and divorced persons contemplating marriage must take this into account when making their plans. The couple must meet with the Rector first. Then, counseling sessions must be undertaken prior to submission of a Petition for Remarriage. Permission must be granted by the Bishop before the wedding date can be set. It is necessary that the Bishop of Virginia give consent to the remarriage. Diocesan guidelines state that no date for marriage should be firmly set, and none announced, until consent has been received from the Bishop. The process for petition takes a minimum of 90 days. The priest who will solemnize the marriage will petition the Bishop and inform the couple of the Bishop's decision.

Fees

The church does not profit from wedding ceremonies. Fees are necessary to offset the costs incurred when a ceremony takes place on the church grounds. These can be discussed when the couple meets to plan the service. For more information, please call the Westover Church office at (804) 829-2488.

Guidelines for Photographers and Videographers

1. Photographs and videos may be taken freely outside the church before and after the service.
2. Photographs may be taken in the church before the service. The church will be open for photographers two hours before the service and photographers must be finished 30 minutes before the service is scheduled to start.
3. After the service, picture taking should last no more than 30 minutes. Photographers are asked not to move chancel furniture or items on the altar.
4. Professional still and video photographers may take pictures during the service using only a stationary camera from the balcony, which must be set up 60 minutes before the service begins. All photos and videos made during the service must be made with natural light. No flashes or video lights will be permitted in the church during the service. Care should be taken to lessen the sound of the shutter during vows and prayers.
5. The wedding ceremony is a sacred service and the dignity of worship should be respected.

Declaration of Intention

This is a declaration of the couple's intention to strive for a Christian marriage; it must be read carefully and signed prior to the wedding day.

We, _____ and _____ desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in *The Book of Common Prayer*. We believe that the union of husband and wife, in heart, body, and mind, is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the raising of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. And we do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God's help thereto.

Signature of Groom: _____

Signature of Bride: _____

Dated: _____ A.D. _____

Flowers

Only real flowers may be used at Westover. The beauty of our building lies in its simplicity, so we use only two bouquets at the altar. Our Altar Guild will arrange the flowers. Flowers must be delivered at the rehearsal. Please contact the church for appropriate information and numbers of area florists. If Westover Church does not hear from a couple within a month of the scheduled ceremony, the Altar Guild will choose the flowers.

Service Times

Wedding services may be performed between the hours of 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. Rehearsals are scheduled for the evening before the ceremony at 5 p.m. Weddings are scheduled one per weekend. Weddings are not scheduled on Sundays. Weddings are not celebrated during the seasons of Advent or Lent.

Alcohol

Alcohol may not be consumed prior to the wedding by any member of the wedding party. Alcohol may not be consumed at any time on the church property.

Seating

Westover Church seats a maximum of 125 people.

For more information, please contact the Westover Church Office at (804) 829-2488.