

THE CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE  
St. James United Church, Sambro, June 2018

In accordance with the United Church Manual it is the Session, together with the minister, who determines who will be married within the church. Once a request is made to be married, the names will be given to the Session for approval. We do our best to make each wedding a faithful, special and meaningful time for each couple. We hope couples are aware that we are here as a community of faith that will welcome them into our midst, and be here for them if they have problems or concerns.

Requirements for Weddings at St. James

All requests must be brought to the Session. Given that we are a community church, we prefer that couples have some connection to our church, either residing in the surrounding community or having family connections. The minister, in consultation with the Session, has the right to refuse to do a wedding if he/she feels that the couple is not suited to marriage either to one another or simply to marriage at St. James. (For example, if the minister senses that there is abuse in the couple or if there is little interest in the spiritual component of the wedding.)

Participation in the Ceremony

Persons other than the presiding minister may read scripture or lead in prayer and music. If the couple wishes to involve another clergy, the Session, together with the presently serving minister, shall invite the visiting clergy to be part of the marriage service. If the regular minister is not available, other United Church clergy can be requested to do the wedding, with the permission of Session.

Civil Requirements

The marriage laws of individual provinces require that certain things be said and done during the ceremony. Among them is a clear declaration of mutual consent to the marriage, the presence of witnesses, and a declaration by the person presiding that the marriage has taken place. All jurisdictions require the signing of legal documents of marriage.

The Covenant

The wedding service affirms that in marriage ‘Christians make a covenant with one another and with God.’ The vows are central to this covenant. In them the two individuals make promises to each other and to God. Some flexibility is possible in the actual service in order that it may reflect the promises and covenant being made by particular people. Couples are invited to write their own vows and, after acceptance by the presider, these will be incorporated into the service. If either person being married has children, the children can be included in the ceremony through promises and rituals such as candle lighting.

Mutuality

In language and symbolic act the marriage service of worship seeks to honour the equality and mutuality of the relationship. Therefore there will be no reference to ‘giving the bride away.’ In its place, the families of the two individuals may be invited to pronounce their blessing on the marriage.

Music

Couples need to confer with the minister about their music. They are welcome to use one of the church musicians or to have another musician play. If one of the church musicians is engaged to play, the fee will be set by the musician. Instruments other than the piano or organ are welcome.

Confetti

For safety reasons no confetti, rice, birdseed or similar material may be thrown inside or outside the church.

### Weddings at Other Venues

In consultation with the Session, the minister may preside over weddings at venues other than the church, if the venues are deemed appropriate.

### Filming and Photographing of the Service

As stated, the celebration of marriage is a service of worship and as such an atmosphere that allows for worship to take place is primary. Since cameras can be intrusive, we request that only the official photographer take photos during the actual service, and that this be done in a subtle manner with no flash and as little movement as possible. Photographers are requested to come to the rehearsal so they can speak with the minister and make arrangements for taking photos. Guests are permitted to take pictures during the processional, the signing of the register, and of the couple leaving after the service. Arrangements can be made to have an 'official' video camera set up before the service. This should be discussed with the minister at the rehearsal.

### Meeting with the Minister

The Session encourages couples, when possible, to attend a marriage preparation course before the date of the wedding. Such a course would explore some of the questions and concerns raised about marriage, and about the relationship into which the couple is entering.

At St. James, each couple will be asked to meet with the minister. Whenever possible, rehearsals should be held one or two days before the wedding day with all members of the wedding party present.

### Donations

The following suggested donations are to be used as guidelines for weddings at St. James:

Church	\$200.00
Minister	\$200.00
Organist	negotiated fee
Caretaker	\$100.00

Couples are asked to make the fees available in separate amounts, clearly designated.

The suggested donation can be waived at the discretion of Session.

It is recommended that a couple be in contact with the minister at least 3 months in advance of the planned wedding date.