

The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony

at Christ Church of the City of Detroit

revised January 2026

Congratulations on your engagement!

*We are honored that you are considering Christ Church Detroit for your wedding ceremony,
and we look forward to getting to know you and rejoicing with you!*

Please read on to learn about Christ Church Detroit and our wedding philosophy and policies.

About Christ Church

Founded in 1845, Christ Church Detroit is the oldest Protestant congregation at its original location in the City of Detroit. The current building is the second structure on this site along Jefferson Avenue, having been constructed during the 1860s and expanded in the early 1900s. A number of Detroit's founding families established this Episcopal parish, and we continue to serve the city as a contemporary, open and affirming, multi-racial, multi-ethnic congregation, enlivened by the Holy Spirit. We are straight and LGBTQIA+, single, married, divorced, and remarried, with and without children. We are a neighborhood church for city residents, and also a destination congregation for those from surrounding areas or across the Canadian border. We are here because prayer and worship strengthen us in our daily lives, and because we have found community, acceptance, mission, and love. We sincerely hope that you, too, will find a home among us.

Getting Married at Christ Church Detroit

Christ Church has no requirement that either of you be a member of our parish, The Episcopal Church, or any church. It is required that at least one member of the couple be baptized (and we are glad to help you prepare for baptism, if you would like!). Further, we require that you be in conversation with our clergy about why a church wedding is important to you, and we warmly invite you to get to know the community and attend services, in person (preferably) or virtually, as that is an excellent way to prepare for Christian marriage. We generally require six months notice in order to allow enough time for premarital counseling (and any divorce paperwork, if applicable), and we typically cannot accommodate more than eighteen months notice. We recognize, however, that wedding planning is complex, and we are glad to do whatever we can to assist you on your journey.

Getting Married in the Episcopal Church

A wedding in the Episcopal Church is governed by *The Book of Common Prayer*, authorized liturgical resources, the laws of the Church (i.e., canon law), and the laws of the State of Michigan. *The Book of Common Prayer* is the foundation for all Episcopal worship services and provides the framework in which a wedding is celebrated. In addition, the Episcopal Church has supplementary resources for more modern weddings and relationship blessings, including same-sex weddings. Our clergy are honored to work with you through the various possibilities, as you and your future spouse create a marriage together with each other and with God's help.

The Episcopal Church requires that: 1) at least one member of the couple be a baptized Christian, 2) the ceremony be attested to by at least two witnesses, and 3) the marriage conform to the laws of the State and the Canons of our church. In accordance with the Canons, early in the planning process each couple signs a Declaration of Intention for Marriage, asserting that they intend to seek God's help and presence in their marriage, and the couple engages in premarital counseling.

Prior Marriages

Please indicate on the Inquiry Form if either of you has been previously married. In such instances, the officiant must meet with you at least six months prior to the wedding date to discuss the previous relationship(s). Canon law requires the consent of the bishop of the diocese for a new marriage to be made. In making such decisions, the bishop will consider the depth of understanding of the individual as to why the previous relationship did not endure, the continuing care of and consideration for the former spouse or partner and for any children involved in the relationship, and faithfulness to the dissolution of the previous marriage. It generally takes several months to prepare and submit a formal application to the bishop requesting permission to marry. In addition, the officiating clergy person is required to review the divorce decree of any previously married person. The clergy will guide and assist you throughout this process.

Venue Specifications

The seating capacity in our historic sanctuary is about 280-300. The sanctuary includes a spacious nave with vaulted ceilings, a dramatic center aisle, a striking chancel known for its gold mosaic, and two intimate side chapels. In addition, the adjacent Sibley House, Cary Lounge, courtyard, and lawns – some with views of the downtown and Renaissance Center – are available for your wedding party preparations, small group gatherings, and photos. Free parking is available for you and your guests, although depending on your plans and number of guests, we may require that you pay for outdoor & indoor security. There are 26 parking spots in our adjacent off of Jefferson Avenue, and 112 spots in a lot behind the church off of Woodbridge Avenue. Unmetered street parking is also available on Woodbridge Avenue and on other nearby streets.

Our AV team is happy to video-record and/or livestream your ceremony for a modest additional fee.

Ledyard Hall, which seats 100, and its newly-renovated kitchen are available for your reception or rehearsal dinner, for additional fees.

Day-of Venue Availability

Along with reserving the church, we will hold all of its adjacent rooms (Sacristies and Choir Rehearsal Room), the Atrium (with elevator and main restrooms), Cary Lounge, Nursery, Courtyard, Sibley House, and the parking lots for your use 2 hours before, 1 hour after, and during your service.

Scheduling Your Wedding

Weddings typically are scheduled on Saturday afternoons (although other days/times may be accommodated) and take approximately 30 minutes to an hour, depending on the inclusion of Holy Communion. The date and time of the wedding and rehearsal are finalized by the Rector in consultation with the Director of Music, Wedding Coordinator, and administrative staff.

Officiating Clergy

A clergy person affiliated with Christ Church will officiate at the wedding ceremony and provide instruction during the wedding rehearsal. Episcopal clergy from outside of the parish, or clergy from other denominations, may assist only at the invitation of the Rector. If you would like a guest minister to participate, please consult with our Rector, the Rev. Emily Williams Guffey, at emily@christcd.org.

Wedding Coordinators

We welcome outside Wedding Coordinators, and you are encouraged to bring any coordinators or planners you may have hired into the process with us. However, since we have lots of experience coordinating ceremonies in our own space, and because of the ceremonial requirements of the Church as outlined above, our clergy and experienced volunteer wedding coordinators will assist you with the logistics of your wedding service at Christ Church, and will serve as your point of contact throughout the process. They will consult with you, conduct the rehearsal, and direct the wedding. Their advice is in keeping with the practices of the Episcopal Church. Once a date is confirmed, the church office will put you in touch. We encourage pre-wedding communication with our clergy and coordinators to ensure mutual preparedness. In some rare cases, extremely elaborate ceremonies that require extensive preplanning and extra communication may require additional personnel fees.

Preparing for Marriage

While your wedding ceremony is very important, our primary interest is in your marriage! Premarital counseling is required of all couples, per Episcopal canon law. You may arrange for counseling with the Christ Church clergy, a licensed marriage and family therapist (with the approval of the officiating clergy person), or another (likewise approved) member of the clergy. Premarital counseling typically involves 3-4 sessions in the 6-9 months leading up to your wedding, and covers a variety of topics common to human relationships and family matters. If outside counseling is used, a short report is prepared by the counselor and given to your officiant.

Preparing Your Wedding Liturgy

The wedding liturgy follows one of the rites of the Episcopal Church, and our priest will walk through the process with you to help you select readings, music, and other aspects of the service. The church office will design and print bulletins for you, or provide guidance for you to do so yourselves.

Music

The priest and the Director of Music will work closely with you as valuable resources as you select your music. You will be provided with expert assistance to ensure that music is appropriately planned and fitting for you as a couple. Because a wedding is a service of worship, its music is subject to the same standards as for any other worship service. In general, we follow the musical customs of the Episcopal Church: sacred, classical, or gospel works. However, exceptions are possible with planning and mutual consideration. All repertoire must be approved by the Rector and Director of Music.

Music Personnel

All weddings at Christ Church require musical oversight by the Director of Music, and his fee is required to be paid to him directly, separately from the cost of the facilities fees. The Director plays organ and/or piano for all weddings at which such instrumentation is desired. If the Director of Music is not available, he will help secure a guest organist/pianist. If the Director of Music is available yet a guest musician is desired instead of the Director, the Director's fee is still charged in full. All outside musicians must be approved by Christ Church staff in advance of the ceremony during the music planning phase of the process. In addition to the organ and piano, other instruments—such as harp, strings, brass, flute—may be included, secured by the couple, their family, or our staff. Typically, couples opt for classical organ or piano music, and instrumentalists or vocal soloists are not uncommon. However, other musical traditions can be part of the ceremony with discussion and approval from the Rector and Director of Music during the planning process.

Rehearsal

A rehearsal, led by the Christ Church Clergy, Wedding Coordinator, and Director of Music, will take place in advance of your wedding, in order to help you and your wedding party feel more comfortable with their roles in the liturgy. Prompt, attentive participation in the rehearsal helps everyone become more familiar with the worship space and the service itself. Those that need to attend the rehearsal include all the attendants and anyone who will be reading Scripture or prayers during the service.

Rehearsals customarily take place the day before the wedding (typically Fridays at 5:00 p.m.) and should last no longer than one hour. Being on time is exceptionally important. Delays caused by members of the Wedding Party may result in additional personnel fees, and may result in musicians not being able to stay for the whole rehearsal.

A valid marriage license and all remaining payments to the church (see below) must be presented by the time of the rehearsal, if not before.

Activities like phone use, earbuds, or listening to something else during the rehearsal are not permitted.

Outside wedding coordinators may attend and contribute, but are not permitted to run the rehearsal.

The priest is the final arbiter of any logistics questions that may arise during the rehearsal.

Decorations

The Wedding Coordinator will advise you about the number and kind of flowers, candles, etc., that are used at Christ Church. The Altar Guild is responsible for all decorations in the church, such as flowers for the altar, markers on family pews, etc., and will place and remove all flowers and candles.

Altar flowers and other church decorations should be secured through florists used by Christ Church. In order to use an outside florist, permission from church staff must be secured.

It is customary for wedding flowers to remain on the altar as a thank offering, after which they are distributed to members of the parish who are ill, and the church will joyfully and gratefully acknowledge your wedding in the following Sunday's service bulletins.

Any personal flowers for the wedding party being delivered to Christ Church should arrive no less than one hour prior to the ceremony.

Altar candles and aisle candles are provided for your wedding. Because your wedding vows are an extension of your baptismal vows, the Paschal candle (Easter candle) will also be burning for your ceremony. Other candles, including unity candles, are not part of wedding liturgies at Christ Church.

Aisle runners are not used as they create a safety hazard on the tile floor. Confetti, balloons, or other such items are not permitted inside the church or on the grounds. A few rose petals, such as those thrown by flower girls/children, may be used on the aisle as long as they are picked up immediately. Bubbles and rice may be used outside as you exit the sanctuary following your service.

Photography and Videography

Use of the church buildings and grounds for photography is limited to no more than two hours before and one hour following the wedding ceremony. Flash photography is not allowed during the ceremony except for the procession into and out of the church, and any photography during the service must not detract from the sanctity of the occasion. All photographers must complete and sign our Wedding Photography Guidelines, which outlines the policies for photography during weddings at Christ Church. In addition, the Wedding Coordinator will need to speak with your photographer in advance of the service to gain clarity of expectations.

The placement of video recording devices is limited to a few places during a wedding ceremony at Christ Church, so as not to obstruct views. The Wedding Coordinator will want to meet with your videographer prior to the service to avoid any misunderstanding of our expectations.

Overall, photography and videography must support and not distract from the purpose, solemnity, and joy of the occasion. Your wedding is a worship service of The Episcopal Church and should be respected as such.

The Celebration and Blessing of Marriage

Finally, and most importantly, *The Book of Common Prayer* calls Christian marriage a “solemn and public covenant between committed adults in the presence of God.” The purpose of marriage is for mutual joy, help, and comfort given to one another and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Christian marriage is an exclusive and permanent relationship modeled after Christ’s total self-giving to us. By being married in the Church, you are making a “faith statement”, that you desire to pledge yourselves to each other in marriage before God and in the presence of God’s people. On your wedding day, you will stand before the altar and commit yourselves to each other for the rest of your lives, stating your intention to live your married life within the community of the Church. You will be asking a priest to bless your commitment and asking the congregation to uphold you in prayer. At the marriage service you will also be inviting the love of God to be at the center of your marriage. Your wedding day will mark the beginning of a Christian marriage, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, whose grace and love alone will sustain you in your life together.

Wedding Fee Structure

An active member of Christ Church Detroit is considered to be one who has been worshipping regularly and contributing financially for at least one year. A new member of Christ Church Detroit is considered to be one who has been worshipping and contributing for less than one year. A visiting Episcopalian is an active member of a different Episcopal parish.

The Standard Donation includes:

- The use of the church and its parking lots on your wedding date beginning two hours before the service and ending one hour afterward. This includes the church and its adjacent rooms (sacristies and choir rehearsal room), Atrium (with elevator and main restrooms), Cary Lounge, Sibley House common rooms, nursery, courtyard, and lawn.
- The use of the same spaces for a wedding rehearsal, typically held the day before the service.
- The help of our church wedding coordinator, who will:
 - be available to meet, speak by phone, or correspond by email to prepare your service
 - run your wedding rehearsal
 - direct your service, so that everyone knows what to do and where to go
- Staff presence for security and hospitality
- Utilities, maintenance, and general administration for you and your guests

* Although the clergy's care is always free of charge, donations toward the priest's discretionary fund, which provides for those in crisis, are greatly appreciated (\$300-500 suggested).

Unless the service will be without music or the Director of Music is unavailable, the Director of Music's fee is charged in full, even if a guest organist/pianist plays. Additional music options are listed below.

	Active Member	Visiting/New	Non-Episcopalian
Standard Donation	1000.00	2000.00	3000.00
Director of Music (organ & piano)	350.00	350.00	350.00
<i>Additional Options</i>			
Singer	150.00	150.00	150.00
Instrumentalist (violin, flute, etc)	150.00	150.00	150.00
Additional Music Rehearsal	150.00	150.00	150.00
Flowers through church florist	150.00+	150.00+	150.00+
Livestream / Video-recording	—	150.00	150.00

A non-refundable deposit in the amount of 25% of the Standard Donation is due in order to secure a date, either by a check made payable to Christ Church Detroit or at christcd.org/online-giving (select "General Gift" and put "Wedding Deposit" in the memo). The remainder is due before the wedding rehearsal.

Checks for each musician, including the Director of Music, should be made out to them personally, and provided by the wedding rehearsal.

A contribution for the priest's discretionary fund may be made online (select "General Gift" and put "Discretionary Fund" in the memo) or by check payable to Christ Church Detroit with "Discretionary Fund" in the memo, also provided by the wedding rehearsal.

All fees are subject to adjustment.