

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church Bethel, Connecticut



Preparing for Holy Matrimony

Holy Matrimony is Christian marriage, in which the couple enters into a lifelong union, make vows before God and the Church, and receive the grace and blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows.

Contact Persons for Marriage Preparations

Priest-In-Charge: The Rev. Norma Schmidt 203-743-1494

Director of Music: Ms. Marcela Ríos Charles 203-917-7692

Altar Guild Directress: Ms. Arlene Coleman 203-792-5536

Parish Sexton: Mr. Angel Sanchez 203-617-7315

As one of the Sacramental Rites of the Church, Holy Matrimony is a commitment that we take seriously at St. Thomas' Church. We hope you will find your marriage preparation with us to be a rewarding experience that will help you not only to prepare for your wedding day, but even more importantly, to be ready to live out your marriage vows as the Lord of love intends.

+ General Requirements +

The Book of Common Prayer states: “Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant [made] in the presence of God. In the Episcopal Church, it is required that one, at least, of the participants 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.”¹

❖ STATE LAWS

A valid license for a marriage to take place in St. Thomas’ Parish can be obtained **only** from the Town of Bethel. The Town Clerk’s office in the Municipal Center on School Street (203-794-8505) will advise you about blood tests, waiting periods, and any other legal questions you may have.

❖ CHURCH CANONS

An ordained minister of the Episcopal Church is permitted to solemnize a marriage only if the following conditions are met:

- a) The right of the parties to contract marriage according to the laws of the State has been ascertained.
- b) Both parties understand that Holy Matrimony is a physical and spiritual union of a man and a woman, entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent of heart, mind, and will, and with the intent that it be lifelong.
- c) Both parties freely and knowingly consent to such a marriage, without fraud, coercion, mistake as to identity of a partner, or mental reservation.
- d) One of the parties has received Holy Baptism.
- e) Both parties have been instructed concerning the nature, meaning, and purpose of Holy Matrimony.
- f) Both parties have signed the following declaration:
We, A.B. and C.D., 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 liturgical forms authorized by this Church. We believe it is for the purpose of mutual fellowship, encouragement, and understanding, for the procreation (if it may be) of children and their physical and spiritual nurture, and for the safeguarding and benefit of society, 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.
- g) If either party has been divorced or had an annulment, the additional and express permission of the Bishop must be received before the marriage may be solemnized.² The Bishop must receive all application materials at least 60 days before the proposed wedding date. The priest will give you more information in this case.

¹*Book of Common Prayer*, page 422

²Digest of Title I, Canons 17-18

+ LOCAL REQUIREMENTS AT ST. THOMAS' CHURCH +

❖ *TIME*

We at St. Thomas' are charged by God and the Church to help you prepare for a lifetime, not just a wedding day. Therefore we ask that you make your participation in our marriage preparation program the top priority in your arrangements for your wedding. Nine months to a year before the date of your wedding is not too soon to make the initial contact with the priest. At least three months are needed to go through the process properly; busy schedules or other factors (e.g. a former marriage) normally add the practical need for more time.

❖ *VISITING CLERGY*

Ordained ministers of other churches are most welcome to assist the clergy of St. Thomas' Parish during a wedding. However, please tell the St. Thomas' priest of your desire to have another cleric present, so that a formal invitation may be extended.

❖ *REHEARSAL*

A wedding rehearsal is a normal requirement to make all the participants comfortable in their roles. The marriage license and all fees should be brought to the rehearsal.

❖ *MUSIC*

A wedding service in the Episcopal Church is a sacramental rite. Accordingly, only sacred music is permitted in the wedding service.

Our Director of Music, Marcela Ríos Charles, is a trained and talented organist (and vocalist). She will be of considerable help to guide you in choosing suitable music for your wedding ceremony. Early contact with her is highly important, since her own schedule must be consulted. Ms. Charles has first right of refusal for weddings and funerals; therefore if you wish to make use of another musician instead of her, she is entitled to receive her normal fee nevertheless.

❖ *FLOWERS*

You may order your flowers directly from a florist, or you may wish to ask our Altar Guild to handle the floral purchase as part of the other preparations they do for your wedding. In either case, arrangements are to be made in consultation with the Directress of the Altar Guild, Ms. Arlene Coleman (phone 203-792-5536).

❖ **FEES**

<u>Organist</u>	\$200	Cash or check to <i>Marcela Ríos Charles</i>
<u>Sexton</u>	\$50	Cash or check to <i>Angel Sanchez</i>
<u>Altar Guild</u>	\$25	for normal setup
	\$35	for complicated arrangements
		Cash or check to <i>St. Thomas' Church Altar Guild</i> (Add cost of flowers , if ordered through the Altar Guild)
<u>Parish Secretary</u>	\$25	if wedding bulletins are done by the parish office Cash or check to <i>Ann Marie Kettler</i>
<u>Visiting Clergy</u>	\$200	
<u>Priest</u>	\$300	Cash or check to <i>St. Thomas' Episcopal Church</i> , with <i>Rector's Discretionary Fund</i> written in the memo line.
<u>Use of Church or Chapel</u>	\$50	Cash or check to <i>St. Thomas' Episcopal Church</i>

❖ **PHOTOGRAPHS**

Please provide your own professional photographer. All participants in the wedding, including the photographer, are to be informed that flash pictures are not permitted during worship; however ample provision is allowed for any and all photographs after the wedding ceremony. The photographer should consult with the Rector before the wedding service begins.

❖ **RECEPTION**

If you wish to use the Church's Parish Hall, please call the Parish Office (203-743-1494) for scheduling on our calendar. Normal office hours are Tuesday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.