St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church
1070 Dutch Road
Fairview, PA 16415

**Wedding Guidelines**
Welcome!

We are so pleased that you wish to be married at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church. We want your wedding to be a meaningful and happy occasion for you, your families and your guests. *The Book of Common Prayer* (BCP, pg. 422) tells us that “Christian Marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God”. “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 his Church, and Holy Scripture commands it to be honored among all people” (BCP, p. 423). All arrangements for weddings at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church will be made to honor the sanctity of this sacrament.

The following guidelines are based on *The Book of Common Prayer* and customs created through experience at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church. We hope that the guidelines will assist you in preparing for a prayerful and meaningful marriage celebration and that you will be able, with the help of the clergy and members of the parish, to have a memorable experience of worship here at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church. We have included details about many of our practices. If you have other questions, please feel free to discuss them with the Clergy or our Wedding Coordinator.

Getting Married at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church

The Rector will be in charge of all weddings celebrated at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church. The liturgy for the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage in *The Book of Common Prayer* (pages 423-432) includes scripture readings, prayers, and the exchange of vows. The service may also include a homily and celebration of Holy Communion, if so desired. Those who intend to be married at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church are subject to the following: At least one member of the couple must be baptized. The authorized liturgies of the Episcopal Church must be used. A minimum of thirty (30) days notice of the marriage must be given as required by Canon Law. If one or both, members of the couple have been previously married, this must be discussed with the Rector during the first session. A waiting period of one year after a divorce is finalized is required by the Episcopal Church before the wedding can take place. Premarital counseling is required. This requires three to six sessions with the Rector and/or his designated aids under his supervision.

The First Steps

The first step is to make an appointment with the Rector who will approve all marriages at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church. Both members of the couple should plan to attend. If the marriage is approved to be held at St. Stephen’s, a date will be arranged. While Canon Law of the church requires at least thirty (30) days, it is advisable to make arrangements for a wedding as far in advance as possible. An advance notice of at
least six (6) months is advisable. Please do not assume that the church and/or the Clergy will be available for the date you have in mind. Please do not make any arrangements for your wedding until your wedding date has been approved by the Rector. Marriages are not scheduled for the following days: New Year’s Day, from Ash Wednesday until after Easter Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church reserves the right to schedule multiple weddings on the same day. Participation of other St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church Clergy should be discussed with the Rector during the first meeting. Participation of Clergy from another church, denomination, or faith must be arranged with the Rector during the first meeting. It is protocol for the Rector to extend the invitation to the visiting Clergy. If there is to be Holy Communion during the ceremony, you should tell the officiating Clergy the approximate number of persons invited to the wedding so the Altar Guild can plan for adequate amounts of Communion elements. The couple should consult with St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church’s Organist about music for the wedding at least three months prior to the wedding. All musical selections must be approved by the Organist. If other instrumentalists or soloists are desired, this must be discussed with the Organist. The couple should consult with the parish Wedding Coordinator three months prior to the wedding about plans for flowers and decorating the church.

The Wedding Coordinator(s)

The Rector will instruct you to consult with the Wedding Coordinator at least three months prior to the wedding. The Wedding Coordinator works under the direction of the Clergy. She/He will work closely with you so that there will be awareness of and conformity to the wedding customs and guidelines of St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church and help ensure that the wedding will be both beautiful and run smoothly. She/He will be available for consultation during the planning period; either she or a member of the Altar Guild will attend the rehearsal and the wedding to assist both the couple and the Clergy.

At least three months prior to the wedding you should provide the Wedding Coordinator the following:

1. Name, address, and phone number for the florist, photographer, and videographers
2. Name and address for each member of the wedding party including any readers, ushers, Acolytes and/or crucifers

Each of these will receive a letter outlining guidelines prior to the wedding. You should also tell the coordinator if Holy Communion will be part of the wedding ceremony, the approximate number of guests you will invite. Special Arrangements for church parish hall receptions must be made well in advance with the Wedding Coordinator. Details concerning the rehearsal and the wedding will be discussed during this meeting. Outside bridal consultants, professional or otherwise, while often helpful in some areas of the wedding preparations, will not be permitted to have any role in either the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church.
The Marriage License

A marriage license should be obtained from the Erie County Courthouse no more than thirty (30) days prior to the service. The license should be at the Church Office no later than ten (10) days prior to the rehearsal so that it and other papers can be completed. Physical examinations arranged by the bride and groom are very appropriate.

The Facilities at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church

The nave (sanctuary) of St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church can accommodate approximately 200 guests. Limited dressing room facilities can be made available for the bride in the Parlor. The rest of the bridal party are encouraged to arrive at the Church dressed in their wedding attire. The groom and his groomsmen will wait for the start of the ceremony in the Sacristy. It is suggested that the bride have a friend or relative not in the wedding party to gather her things after the service and put them in a car for transportation to the reception. Furniture or other items at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church should not be moved except under the direction of the Wedding Coordinator.

Acolytes, Readers, Crucifers, and Communion Ushers

Acolytes are available through the parish and will be assigned by the Acolyte Warden or the Wedding Coordinator. If you have a parishioner you would like to serve, please discuss this with the Wedding Coordinator. It is appropriate for someone associated with the bride and grooms to read scripture during the marriage ceremony. It is best if this person is accustomed to speaking in public on a regular basis. The readers must be approved by the Rector and should plan on attending the rehearsal. If qualified readers are not available, the Clergy will read the scripture. Please consult with the Rector before asking an Acolyte or Crucifer from another church to serve at your wedding. It is a nice gesture to give the Acolyte a small gift for giving his/her time to serve at your wedding. If Holy Communion is served it, is strongly recommended that ushers from St. Stephen’s Church serve during this part of the service. Please discuss arrangements with the Wedding Coordinator.

The Wedding Party

It is advisable due to space constraints to limit the size of your wedding party. The suggested number for St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church is a maximum number of six female and six male attendants. It is suggested that no children under four years old be in the wedding party. The Wedding Coordinator can discuss with you other ways to include these children in your important event. Animals (other than service animals) are not permitted to attend the wedding or be included in the wedding in any way. Please be prepared to inform the Wedding Coordinator how many pews will need to be reserved for family/special guests.
Flowers and Decorations

Marriage at St. Stephen’s is a worship service and a sacrament; therefore, flowers and decorations are those that are in keeping with the liturgy and customs of the Church. At least three months prior to the wedding, please discuss these plans with the Wedding Coordinator. Only fresh flowers may be used. Floral arrangements may be placed on the stands or shelves on each side of the altar. Containers for the arrangements should be provided by the florist. Flower arrangements must not be placed on the altar itself. The traditional candles which are used as a part of the worship service will be provided by the Altar Guild. No other candles will be permitted. Please do not plan to use an aisle runner due to the danger of tripping. After the wedding, the bridal party is responsible for removing the flowers and any other decorations from the sanctuary. Scattering flower petals and birdseed outside the church is permitted, however rice is not allowed.

Music

Arrangements for the wedding music must be made with the Organist, and approved by her and the Rector. If the church’s organ is to be used, then the parish organist is to be asked to play. Should our organist be unavailable, you must clear the use of the organ with the organist and have approval for another organist, who must contact our organist prior to any music selection. Use of a musical instrument other than the organ must also be approved by the organist. The music must be sacred and appropriate for a worship service. The organist can help you select authorized pieces and texts. No secular music may be played or sung as a part of the wedding ceremony. If used, the appropriate time for soloists to sing is after the mothers are seated and before the procession begins. The singing of the Lord’s Prayer is not included, as this is a corporate prayer said by the congregation during the service. The “Wedding March” from Wagner’s opera Lohengrin is discouraged in the Episcopal Church.

Photography and Videography

Your videographers and photographer will receive a letter from the Wedding Coordinator regarding the guidelines for photography at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church. Furniture should not be moved for the ceremony, pictures, or Videography except under the direction of the Wedding Coordinator.

Still Photography

Still photography of the wedding must be unobtrusive. The photographer will be allowed one hour before the ceremony for still photography whether inside or outside the church. If you desire any family members in the pre-wedding photographs, those persons should be at the Church 1 hour prior to the wedding. Photography of the wedding party must end 30 minutes prior to the beginning of the ceremony. The service begins with the Prelude and ends with the Postlude. Once the procession has begun,
the photographer may not take pictures with a flash except to take a picture (from inside the doorway to the Nave) of the bride as she starts down the aisle. Once she has started down the aisle, she and her escort are not permitted to turn and face the photographer. During the ceremony, only time-lapse photography (absolutely no flash) from the balcony may be used. The photographer must stay in the balcony until the music for the recessional has begun. Photo sessions following a service that includes Holy Communion will start only after the Altar Guild has cleared the Altar and Credence Table of all Eucharistic vessels. Time will be called when to cease all photography as the Altar Guild must prepare the Church for Sunday services. Photography and Video Taping by family, friends or photographers is not permitted during the Wedding Ceremony.

Videotaping

All videotaping must be done from the balcony of the Nave. No extra lights can be used. Video cameras are not permitted in any other location. The videographers should bring a tripod and an extension cord if needed. The videographers must remain in the balcony during the service.

The Service Bulletin

Service Bulletins for your wedding can be provided by the Church office for a $50 charge. Please discuss this with the Wedding Coordinator or the office staff.

The Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal usually takes place the day before the wedding ceremony at 5:30 p.m. The rehearsal will last approximately one hour. Please plan at least two (2) hours between the starting time of the rehearsal and the starting time of your rehearsal dinner. All members of the bridal party, including children, are expected to participate in the rehearsal. Please ask everyone to be on time, appropriately dressed and ready to begin at the appointed hour. The use of a “substitute bride” during the rehearsal is not a part of Episcopal tradition. The Rector or officiating Clergy will be in charge of the rehearsal. The Wedding Coordinator or a member of the Altar Guild will be available to assist the Clergy and the couple. Outside bridal consultants are not permitted to have a role in the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony. The possession or use of alcohol/illegal drugs or tobacco is not permitted on church property. In addition, members of the wedding party must not arrive at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church for the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony under the influence of alcohol/illegal drugs. The primary role of the Clergy is in premarital counseling, the rehearsal, and the wedding ceremony.Appearances at parties after the rehearsal and at receptions are secondary and possible only if parish and pastoral duties allow. Therefore, please do not wait for the Rector or other Clergy to arrive before starting these social functions.
The Wedding Day

The Wedding Coordinator will determine the arrival time for all the wedding participants. This includes the arrival time for the photographer/videographers. They will receive a letter from the Wedding Coordinator with specific details. Please do not tell your wedding party or photographers different times than those specified by the Wedding Coordinator. If your wedding is scheduled near the time of a meal, you might want to provide some simple snacks and drinks for your wedding party. Bottled water is the drink of choice—it is spilled, the spot can be dried and will be almost invisible. Inform all family members who are to be in pictures prior to the wedding of the designated time to be at the church. Those guests who are to be seated in the reserved pews, except mothers and grandmothers, should be seated fifteen (15) minutes prior to the beginning of the ceremony. Inform all family members/friends and the wedding party who are to be in pictures after the wedding to be readily available immediately after the ceremony. There is not time to search for these participants. Weddings at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church start on time. There will be no delays for seating of guests who arrive late. The introduction of the bride and groom by the Priest is not a part of an Episcopal marriage ceremony. No alcoholic beverages are permitted.

Fees and Donations

For members of the congregation who attend on a regular basis

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<td>Soloist</td>
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**Total** $300.00

Costs for NON-members of the congregation

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<td>Wedding Coordinator</td>
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**Contact Information**

Call the Church Office for the Church Secretary @ 814-474-5490. Our Fax number is 814-474-3737.

The Rector is contacted through the church office @ 814-474-5490, please call for an appointment.

The Church’s email address is church@ststephens-fairview.org

The Church Website is found at www.ststephens-fairview.org

**The Organist** is accessed through the office.

**The Wedding Coordinators are Ellen Masteller and Gretchen Tome.**

The Clergy, Staff, and Lay Volunteers are delighted to help you as you plan for this important event. Please let us know if you have further questions. The *Book of Common Prayer* states that “Holy Matrimony is Christian Marriage, in which the woman and man enter into a life-long union,
make their vows before God and the Church, and receive the grace and blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows.” (BCP pg. 861) May God’s grace and blessing be with you as you prepare to take your wedding vows.