

Marriage Preparation Disclosure Statement

This information is given to you in order to outline the purpose and framework of our marriage preparation consultations and fulfill the requirements of the California State Department of Health for counselors.

What is Marriage Preparation?

Marriage celebrates the commitment to a partnership that profoundly reflects the mystery of creation in the lives of two human beings. The path toward marriage is often filled with strong emotions that both encourage and mystify those who are embarking on this great journey and for this reason the motivations, the values, the personalities and the plans that begin to blend together need support for clarification and reflection. *The Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church expresses this in the opening paragraphs of the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage:

“ . . . Marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.”

Marriage preparation offers you the opportunity to examine together the mix of values, ideals and plans that you share as a couple. By using marriage and personality indicators, specifically the PREPARE/ENRICH Inventory, we will look together at who you are as individuals and how you differ and agree on your assumptions and ideals about marriage. The goal is not to test you, but help you explore the groundwork of your life together, which you will publicly announce at your wedding.

Because these marriage preparation meetings reflect your decision to marry in the Christian church, our fundamental attitude toward the work is that **you two**, as a couple, are the ministers of the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. In other words, our hope is that the work you and your counselor do together will serve in making you better ministers to one another in your marriage and to those whose lives are closely affected by your relationship.

Confidentiality

The work done between you and your counselor is considered to be confidential. However, this confidentiality includes the priest whom you have invited to be the celebrant at your wedding. Your counselor will send a confidential report summarizing the work you have done to this priest, allowing him or her to meet the obligation of the Canons of the Episcopal Church to verify that you are prepared for your marriage.

If either or both of you have been divorced, discussion about the reasons for your divorce and your reflections on how this experience figures in your life and present marriage plans will be discussed. Elements of the report sent to your officiating priest may be included in a letter to the Bishop of the Diocese where you live as part of the requirement that the priest asks permission to officiate at your marriage.

Under no other circumstance will your counselor give information to anyone else, either written or oral, about the nature or the specifics of our marriage preparation sessions, except as described below.

According to the laws that regulate counselors in this state, the exceptions to this legal obligation of confidentiality include situations where the counselor suspects that a minor child is being abused or subjected to a criminal act, where there is risk of bodily harm to yourself or someone else, or if you bring charges against your counselor in court.

Marriage Preparation and Therapy

Counselors typically must have 24 hours notice for the cancellation of a session. If, without good cause, you cancel in less than 24 hours, you will be charged at the hourly rate negotiated for your sessions by St. James. Paying the counselor for the missed session will be your responsibility rather than the responsibility of St. James.

The minimum number of consultations for pre-marital preparation is five. However, if it appears that additional meetings may be warranted either through your suggestion as a couple, or by the counselor's professional opinion, any decision made to continue beyond the initial agreement will lie with you as a couple.

If either one of you would choose to begin individual psychotherapy or psychoanalysis with your counselor about issues that may arise out of marriage preparation, or other personal issues, the terms and agreements for individual therapy may require a format somewhat different from that arranged for marriage preparation work, including a different fee and disclosure statement. This may also be true if you decide to begin couples' counseling after your marriage. Both your marriage preparation counselor and your clergy can give referrals upon request.