

The Parish Church Of St George
Brockworth



Your wedding in the Church of England



Why get married in church?

A marriage service, wherever it is held, is a public declaration of love and commitment to your partner.

If you choose to get married in church, there is an added dimension - the assurance that God cares about your relationship and that his resources and strength are available to help you. Including God in your marriage doesn't mean that you will avoid all the usual ups and downs, but you will know that you can look to God for help and guidance and that his love will sustain you. You will also have the support and encouragement of the Christian Church family.

Preparing for the service: frequently asked questions

Q| *Where can I get married?*

A| You are entitled to be married in the church of the Church of England parish where one or other of you lives. If you are an active, worshipping member of another church congregation, it is usually possible to be married there. Speak to your parish priest.

If the church you wish to be married in is not the local church of either of you, you will have to go on the electoral roll of that parish: you will be expected to attend the church services for six months before going on the roll.

In certain circumstances you can apply for a Special Licence. (www.facultyoffice.org.uk/marriage.html) At the moment you can only have a Church of England wedding in a parish church or some other place of worship - normally one licensed by the Bishop. It is not normally possible to have your church wedding in other venues, for instance in a hotel.

Q| *How do I book the church?*

A| As soon as you have decided you would like to get married in church, get in touch with your local parish priest to see whether the church is free on your preferred date. Your priest or minister will probably wish to meet with you in person to discuss your plans.

Q| *What are the legal requirements?*

A| The normal preliminary to getting married in the Church of England is by banns. You must have your banns read out in church for three Sundays during the three months before the wedding. This is often done over three consecutive Sundays but does not have to be. Banns are an announcement of your intention to marry and a chance for anyone to put forward a reason why the marriage may not lawfully take place. Banns need to be read in the parish where each of you lives as well as at the church in which you are to be married if that is another parish. There are circumstances where some form of licence, such as a common licence or special licence, is more appropriate. Your priest or minister will discuss with you what you need to do.

If you are under the age of eighteen, you must have your parents' consent to marry.

There are special guidelines on church marriage if you have been divorced: see the separate question on this issue.

Q| *How much will it cost?*

A| The legal fees for a marriage cover the publication of the banns, certificate of banns (if necessary), the marriage service and a certificate of marriage. These fees are fixed centrally and your parish priest will be able to tell you what they are.

These fees do not cover any extras you may wish to have for the service, such as a choir, organist, bell-ringers, special lighting, fees for video recording and so on. Check with your parish priest.

Q| *Can I choose what kind of service I want?*

A|. You will need to talk over the options with your parish priest. There are usually one or more readings from the Bible in the service - your parish priest can help you select the most appropriate. There will also be some prayers, which you may help to choose, or you may write your own. You may also decide to have someone other than the minister leading the prayers.

The minister may give a brief talk or sermon.

If you have friends or family members you would like to involve in the service, for example by doing a reading or playing a musical instrument, discuss this with your parish priest **at an early stage of your planning.**

Q| *Which hymns and songs can I have?*

A| Your parish priest or the church organist can advise on suitable hymns and songs, as well as music for coming in, going out and during the signing of the register. If you want to set out the words and/or music on a printed service sheet, you will need to comply with the copyright laws - you should consult your parish priest about this.

Q| *Should we have one or two rings?*

A| A wedding ring is a symbol of unending love and faithfulness, and of the commitment you are making to each other. It is entirely up to you whether you have one ring or two.

Q| *Can we have a video recording of the service?*

A| You will need to ask permission from the parish priest and from any organist/worship leader. There may be a fee to pay: ask your parish priest about this.

Q| *What if one of us is divorced?*

A| The Church of England teaches that marriage is for life. It also recognizes that, sadly, some marriages do fail and, if this should happen, it seeks to be available for all involved. The Church accepts that, in **exceptional** circumstances, a divorced person may marry again in church during the lifetime of a former spouse. →

Some ministers may be willing to conduct such a marriage in church you should make an appointment to speak to your parish priest before setting a date. The minister will want to talk to you frankly about the past, your hopes for the future and your understanding of marriage (a form and explanatory statement, Marriage in church after divorce, is available or can be ordered from Church House Bookshop, phone 020 7898 1300, www.chbookshop.co.uk). If it is not possible for your proposed marriage to take place in church, your priest may consider other alternatives with you, such as a Service of Prayer and Dedication after a civil ceremony.

What do Christians believe about marriage?

Christians believe that marriage is a gift from God. In the marriage ceremony, a couple make a public declaration of lifelong commitment to love each other, come what may.

The Bible compares married love with the love Jesus has for his followers. He expressed his love by being prepared to sacrifice himself, even to die for the people he loved. This is amazing, unconditional love. Jesus never said 'I love you, but ...'. In our marriages we can try to follow his model by loving our partners in a self-sacrificial way, putting their needs before our own.

The marriage ceremony gives you a new legal status as husband and wife and a new stability within which your relationship can flourish and grow. Christians believe that marriage offers the right place for the fulfilment of our sexuality and that it provides a stable and secure environment for bringing up children.

The Marriage service

Beginning the service Traditionally, the bride and groom enter the church separately - the groom first with the best man, and the bride at the time set for the start of the service, on the arm of her father or another relative or friend (it does not need to be a man). However, the bride may enter alone if she wishes, or the couple may enter together.

The minister will welcome the congregation. Your family and friends have an important role to play as witnesses and supporters of your marriage.

The minister will read an introduction explaining what Christians believe about marriage. He or she will also ask, as the law requires, if anyone knows any reason why the marriage may not lawfully take place.

Declarations You will be asked to promise before God, your friends and your families, that you will love, comfort, honour and protect your partner and be faithful to them as long as you both shall live.

The minister will also ask the congregation to declare that they will support and uphold your marriage.

Vows Turning to each other, the bride and groom take each other's right hand and make vows:

'to have and to hold
from this day forward;
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
till death us do part'

Rings The couple then exchange a ring or rings as a 'sign of their marriage' and a reminder of the vows:

'With my body I honour you,
all that I am I give to you,
and all that I have I share with you,
within the love of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.'

Proclamation

The minister will then declare that you are now husband and wife. The minister does not 'marry you'; you marry each other. The minister just directs you in this and then tells everyone that you have done it properly.

Prayers In the prayers God's blessing and help is asked for you. There may be a prayer for the gift of children, but every couple will have their own feelings about this, so it's best to discuss the details with your minister. You may wish to help choose the prayers or to write your own.

Readings and talk or sermon It is usual to have one or more readings (one of which should be from the Bible) and the minister will generally give a talk or sermon.

Signing of the register After you have exchanged your vows, the bride, groom and two witnesses must sign the register. This is a legal requirement and the minister will give you a copy of the marriage certificate.

A wedding is one day - a marriage is a lifetime You have probably already spent many hours planning your wedding. There are so many things to think about - the dress, the cake, whom to invite, the honeymoon. All of these are important, but the wedding is just one day, while marriage should last for the rest of your lives. →

Alongside the wedding preparations it is also important to spend time as a couple talking through your expectations of marriage. However much you think you have in common, you are still two separate individuals with different backgrounds, personalities, experiences, hopes and fears. The minister who is taking your service will probably want to spend some time with you talking through these issues.

What should we do now?

If this is to be the first marriage for both of you, then phone our church office to see if the date is available. If either of you has been married before then you need to speak to the parish priest before thinking about dates. Once we have agreed to marry you and a date has been agreed you will be asked to pay a non returnable deposit. You will be guided through the rest of the process.

The parish priest will want to work with you in planning your wedding service and will try to accommodate your ideas, but please don't make any firm commitments until the priest has agreed your suggestions.

We hope that you have a wonderful wedding day and that it will mark the beginning of a long and very happy marriage.

Contacting us.

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