

Getting married in Church

We are pleased that you want to involve us and the Church in your wedding. We realise that your wedding is a very special occasion and we will do all in our power to make sure that all goes smoothly and that it is a happy day for you both. You will have many things on your mind; we hope this leaflet will help you.

PREPARATION

The two of you are the most important part of the wedding. You are probably very busy making lots of practical preparations, but you need to prepare yourselves. The priest will stand closer to you at your wedding than anyone else; s/he takes you through the vows you make; and so s/he has a responsibility to help prepare you for your marriage. Each priest has his/her own way of carrying out this duty (which is also a privilege). The priest will probably see you several times, and talk to you about what it means to be married.

Our wish is not to tell you what to do, but to give you a good start. It may seem as though we spend a lot of time on the possible problems, e.g. money, children, time together, arguments, etc - but this is because we know that if you can deal with these (with help from God, your family and friends, and each other) you will be as excited about being married in 30 or 50 years time as you are now.

WHAT THE CHURCH BELIEVES ABOUT MARRIAGE

Marriage is more than two people agreeing to live together. The Marriage Service talks about two ways in which it is more.

Firstly, marriage is to do with God and His gifts. He has given marriage to us for friendship and companionship, for love making (including - but not just - sex) and for the growing up of children within loving families. In our family life and married life, as we learn to get along with each other and to love and forgive each other, we learn about God. Marriage is a tough challenge (as well as an exciting one) and we need God's gifts to help us manage, gifts such as patience and generosity. In the Marriage Service your families and friends will ask God for these gifts for you. Spend some time thinking carefully about what you need to help you be happily married for the whole of your lives. Then you will be able more effectively to ask God for His gifts. God gives us his gifts freely - we have to learn how to unwrap them, how to appreciate them and use them.

Secondly, in marriage you are two separate individuals with your own likes and dislikes, hopes and ideas. One ought not to submerge in the other, but you are also one married couple. Blame and praise are not divided between you - one more at fault than the other, for example - you are one married couple. Each of you will teach the other and help the other to grow as a person and the two of you must keep on growing together. The person you first turn to will be your husband or wife, and you only turn to outsiders together. Working out what this means will take a long time - the rest of your life.

WHICH CHURCH

Church is not like a supermarket - where you can choose whichever one you like. Church is like a family, to which we belong. There is some choice: you can choose to be married at any Church where either of you worship regularly, or in whose Parish you live, or where you have long-standing links.

WHAT TIME

Weddings can legally happen between 8am. and 6pm. on any day of the year, but many churches would not be able to have weddings on such days as Christmas Day, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday (the day before Easter Day) and Easter Day. Weddings are often booked up well in advance.

LEGALITIES

It must be ascertained that there is no legal reason why you may not get married. Legal objections are that:-

- 1) you are already married
- 2) you are related to each other
- 3) you are under 18 (16 without your parents' consent)

This is done through one of:

- a) the publication of banns;
- b) the issue of an ecclesiastical licence;
- c) the issue of a special licence granted by or on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury;
- d) the issue of a Superintendent Registrar's certificate.

When you book your wedding you will be advised which of the above fits your particular situation. There are special procedures to go through when either or both of you is a foreign national.

Banns

Banns are called in the Churches of both your Parishes on three Sundays before the wedding. YOU will need to see the vicars of both Churches to arrange this, and you will need to collect a banns certificate from the Church where you are not getting married, to give to the priest where you are getting married. (Banns certificates are valid for three months only). Most Churches would expect you to go to Church at least six times to hear the banns - three times in each Church. We advise that your Banns are called as early as possible and that you collect (from the other Church) and deliver (to the priest marrying you) the Banns Certificate at least one month before your marriage.

These legalities are your responsibility – although we will help you. You should sort them out as soon as possible, preferably two months before you are due to get married.

THE FEES

The legal fees for a wedding are set by Parliament. The fees for choir, organist, etc., are set by each Church. Both sets of fees vary from year to year. The priest will tell you about arrangements for paying fees.

About half of the legal fees goes to the Diocese to help pay for the clergy. The other half, together with the “extra” fees goes to the Church where you are getting married to help them run their building.

THE FLOWERS

Each Church has its own arrangements about flowers. You will need to speak to the priest taking your marriage

PHOTOGRAPHS and VIDEO

The most important thing here is that the photographer should not get in the way. Although it is important that you have a beautiful record of your wedding day, it is also important that the day itself (and especially the service) is enjoyable and reverent. Flash photography would be a disturbance, so it is not usually allowed during the service. Please tell your guests they will not be allowed to take pictures or videos during the service - only either the professional photographer, or one person chosen by you to take photos.

Some Churches allow you to take photographs in Church freely after the service - but please do check with the priest.

Some churches allow a video recording of your wedding; some do not. Because a video is recording a copyright service and copyright music, and the music is live, you will need a copyright license and also need to pay a recording fee.

MUSIC

The hymns and music at a wedding can add a lot to the service. Do choose carefully the hymns, hymn-tunes and music at the entrance of the Bride, during the Signing of the Registers, and when the Bride and Groom leave. Many Churches suggest that you talk to the Organist. There is a list of suggested hymns on the website.

THE REHEARSAL

Your wedding day is a very busy day, with much rushing around. It is most important that you "slow down" during the time in Church and that you are at ease, otherwise you will remember nothing of the service. The rehearsal, taken by the priest a few days before the wedding itself, should help you to do this. It will also make sure that everything goes well on the day of the wedding.

THE SERVICE

There is no need to have a printed order of service unless you want to - it is perfectly alright simply to use the Church's hymn books. But if you are going to have a printed order of service it would be important to check with the priest, probably asking him/her to read through a draft before getting it printed.

Many Churches take a collection for the work of the Church during one of the hymns. It is probably best to put this information in any printed leaflet.

REGISTERS

There are four copies to sign - one for you, one to send to the national Registry Office and two for the Church. You sign your full names, the bride using her maiden name. Two adult witnesses also sign - often the bride's father and the best man, or the bride's father and the groom's father, or the best man and the chief bridesmaid.

CONFETTI

The problem about confetti is that someone has to clear it up. In order to minimise this, many

Churches ask that confetti be thrown only when well away from the Church Door – so that it doesn't blow into church; some couples suggest their guests may like to use rice (which was the original confetti) or one of the confettis which birds can eat.

TIMING

It is most important that the service starts promptly. The custom of the bride keeping the groom waiting is a cruel and silly one. The priest taking your wedding will probably talk to you about appropriate timings for arrival of the different people involved in the service.

AFTERWARDS

At the moment the thing you are most bothered about is the Big Day. But the Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, after the wedding and the week after, and the week after that, will come. They are actually more important than the wedding day! We hope that some of the things we have said will help you with the time after you have married. Your family and friends will support you; God himself is the biggest help.

You have chosen to be married in Church because it seems right and proper, and because in Church we ask God for His help and hear the blessing (a promise that He will help). We and you need God's help every day, and the best place to receive that help is in Church. Church is the right place for you to be. We hope you will keep on coming.

We hope that you realise

that we take your marriage very seriously,
that we want you to think carefully,
that we believe that you can (through the Church) offer God some thing,
that God does (through the Church) offer you something.

Any Sunday that you come to Church we will do our best to make you welcome; we are all trying to make our homes and families, the homes and families of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE CONGREGATION

Congregations are always delighted to welcome couples coming to Church to prepare for marriage. They will pray for you, and they hope that you will come to feel that you belong at Church.

KEEP US INFORMED

Please keep in contact! If you move house, change your telephone number etc. please let the priest taking your wedding know immediately. Our only way of getting in touch is by using the information on your application form.

Sometimes weddings have to be cancelled. If this should happen in your case, please do let the priest know as soon as possible. A letter is best but a short phone call will do.