

GETTING MARRIED

Getting married is the most important decision in many people's life. Saying, "yes, I love this person so much that I want to spend the rest of my life with him or her" is an enormous leap of commitment for anyone to make. We do it because we want to live our lives with someone we love. It is something to celebrate not only with your intended partner, but also with friends and family.

Getting married in church recognizes that such an important step in life involves all the support that it can get. That is why our friends and family are there supporting us. We want the marriage to work and to be life long, and getting married in the presence of God recognizes God in the world and in our marriage, supporting, sustaining, and loving us.

The wedding is not an end but a beginning. The day itself should be wonderful and we are here to help you as much as we can to make it a special day you will always remember with joy.

Also we hope that you can get it all into the right perspective. You are making the most important and wonderful promises of your life to each other and to God. These, with his help, are for life. The church isn't there just for Christmas – or the wedding day. It is here to sustain you throughout your married lives, as far as you will let it.

Why get married in church?

When you marry in church the commitment you make is to each other and to God. You decide to get married because of the love that you have for each other, and in marriage you are declaring your commitment and desire to love one another for the rest of your lives. To do this you will need to keep returning to the well-springs of love which Christians have experienced flow from God.

We are given a pattern for marriage and commitment in the love that Jesus has shown for all his people. His self-giving love is an example and inspiration, calling us to be generous, to give of ourselves and make sacrifices for others.

By getting married in church you will make your commitment before God and before the congregation as representatives of the wider family and community. They are to witness to and support you in their marriage, not just there as onlookers. When the priest joins your hands together proclaiming "those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder" this is the sign that you are beginning a new covenanted life together in the community. This is a public act and one that your witnesses and friends are there to respect and uphold.

Who can marry in a Parish Church?

In order to be married in the Church of England one or both of you normally has, or wants to build up, some connection with the parish. For information and suggestions about this, come and talk to us. Any unmarried person resident in the parish can, and others may, be legally married in church, so far as the law of the land allows, the vicar acting as registrar.

What if I am already divorced?

We all recognise that sometimes things go wrong and people need fresh starts. Remarriage in church is therefore possible. You will need to talk with the vicar, so please do phone or catch him over a cup of coffee after the 10.0 a.m. Sunday service. (What happens at the Parish Communion is explained on the website www.sandfordchurch.org.uk).

Planning your wedding

As well as planning the mechanics of the day, we offer special preparation time to reflect together on what marriage means to you, the promises you will make, the priorities and values at the heart of your relationship and the resources on which you can draw to keep those promises in good times and in bad. You will also need to make decisions about music and readings. The clergy are here to help you with all these decisions.

Banns, licences and fees

Before anyone can marry they need to be legally free to do so. For British citizens resident in the parish banns are the usual check. We call banns at the 10.0 service on three Sundays during the three months before your wedding, and we encourage you to come to be part of the living church in whose building you will be married. The standard fees for Anglican weddings are the same in all churches and can be seen on the noticeboard. Music and flowers are optional extras.

St Andrew's, Sandford-on-Thames

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The Order of Service

Many couples like to print an order of service which can be as elaborate or as simple as you like. A usual order is as follows (though this does sometimes change) but please don't print anything until you have shown the clergy a draft copy.

Cover page
Title of music for entry of the bride
Welcome and introduction
Hymn
The Reading(s)
The Marriage
The Blessing of the Marriage
Hymn
The Prayers
Hymn
The Registration of the Marriage
Title of music for departure of the bridal party
Thanks to those who have helped and directions to reception.

Some suggestions for readings: 1 Corinthians 13 – faith, hope and love; Ephesians 3.14-21 – Paul's prayer for Christ to dwell in us; Philippians 4.4-9 – rejoice in these good things; 1 John 4.7-12 – let us love one another, for love is of God; Mark 10.6-9, 13-16 – what God has joined let no one separate; John 15.9-17 – love one another as I have loved you.

Some suggestions for hymns: Come down, O love divine; Lord of all hopefulness; Dear Lord and Father; Love divine; Be thou my vision; Lord of the dance; Morning has broken; Guide me O thou great redeemer; Great is thy faithfulness; Praise my soul; Jerusalem. Or you may prefer to use a CD of other music.

Some suggestions for organ music:

Entry: Wagner, Bridal chorus from Lohengrin; Handel, Arrival of the Queen of Sheba; Purcell, Trumpet tune;
Exit: Mendelssohn's Wedding March; Walton's Crown Imperial March; Widor's Toccata.