

Your Wedding



A guide to getting married at
Plymstock United Church

Congratulations!

You're looking forward to your Big Day, you're thinking about getting married here, and you're wondering what's involved. Planning for your wedding might be a piece of cake, or you might be feeling the tension already. And for couples who don't usually worship here, the service itself is a bit of an unknown factor...

Are we allowed to get married in church? What will we have to say? What about young children? How many guests can we have? What hymns do we choose? What costs are involved? Can we have photographs or videos? What about flowers...?

This booklet tries to answer these sorts of questions. And when you talk with the Minister he can help you think about the details of the service.

We want you to have the best possible wedding service. We want you to have a wonderful marriage, too. That's something which you yourselves have to work at in the years ahead. But a good start certainly helps!

Our hope is that together we can create a relevant and special service that celebrates your commitment to each other, and does so in the presence of God. As a Church we are standing on the touchline, cheering you on. We believe God is, too!

Arranging your wedding in church

We are delighted that you wish to marry in the Church, and we assume that this is not something you wish to take lightly. So we do expect that you will attend three of the Sunday services (just as you would expect to attend the reading of Banns if you were marrying in the Church of England). Our services are at 10 am, with details available on our website.

The Minister will have an initial meeting with you to discuss some of the practicalities and make some preliminary arrangements. This will include booking the date for the wedding and explaining some of the legal requirements.

A second meeting will then be arranged for after you have joined us for worship on at least three occasions. At this meeting the details of the service will be planned, including such items as hymns, music and readings.

This is a Christian Church and our wedding services, as with the rest of our activities, reflect this fact. If there are non-religious music or readings that you wish to include, this will be at the discretion of the Minister based on the Bible's teaching and the traditions of the Church.

We recognise that sometimes marriages do fail, for all sorts of sad and painful reasons. Even so, it is perfectly possible for divorced persons to marry again in a church, and we are happy to help you prepare for a new future together. Please feel free to discuss this with the Minister.

The church sanctuary can seat around 200 people, although we normally have about 120 seats set out.

The Details of the Service

A typical wedding service will usually include these elements...

Entrance & processional music

The Bride and her entourage process down the aisle

Hymn

Chosen by the couple.

Prayer

Declaration of Purpose

We have come together in the presence of Almighty God
to witness the marriage of [GROOM] and [BRIDE].

We are here to share in their joy, to celebrate their love,
to seek God's blessing upon them,
and to support them with our prayers.

Marriage is a gift from God
who created us male and female
and who brings husband and wife together;
man and woman united as one flesh.

Marriage is a sacred relationship,
a way of life made holy by God:
one that everyone should respect and honour,
as husband and wife begin a new life in the community.

Marriage enriches society, strengthens community,
and was blessed by the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ
among those celebrating a wedding at Cana in Galilee.

Marriage is a sign of unity and loyalty;
one man and one woman,
faithful to each other throughout their lives,
just as Christ is united with, and faithful to, his bride, the Church.

It is not to be undertaken carelessly, lightly, or selfishly;
but reverently and responsibly in the sight of Almighty God.

It is the way of life that [GROOM] and [BRIDE] are now about to enter.
Therefore I am required to say that if anyone knows of any reason why
they may not lawfully marry, they should declare it now.

The Legal Declarations

The minister says to the couple who are to be married:

If either of you know of any reason why you may not lawfully marry, you should say so now.

The minister invites first the man and then the woman to say after him...

**I do solemnly declare that I know not
of any lawful impediment why I, [GROOM],
may not be joined in matrimony to [BRIDE].**

Alternatively you may choose more modern wording...

**I declare that I know
of no legal reason why I, [GROOM],
may not be joined in marriage to [BRIDE].**

Or, you may choose for the Minister to ask the following question...

Are you, [GROOM], free lawfully to marry [BRIDE] ?

To which you reply...

I am.

Each of these alternatives above are the free choice of the couple.

Bible Reading:

Suggested readings are listed later in this booklet. Sometimes a friend or family member might read the passage, if you wish.

Questions of Intent

The minister asks the man:

[GROOM], will you take [BRIDE] to be your wife? Will you love her, comfort her, honour and keep her, in sickness and in health, and be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?

To which the Groom replies:

I will.

The minister asks the bride

[BRIDE], will you take [GROOM] to be your husband? Will you love him, comfort him, honour and keep him, in sickness and in health, and be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

To which she replies:

I will.

Giving Away

Here the minister asks:

Who brings this woman to be married to this man?

The bride's father (or some other person) responds:

I do.

The wedding party, except for the bride, groom and Best Man, may now be seated.

The Marriage

The minister invites the couple to turn and face each other, to join hands, and to repeat the following promise after him (or by reading, or reciting them from memory.) The parts in italic are required by law.

First the groom, then the bride (with obvious word changes!), says...

***I call upon these persons here present
to witness that I, [GROOM]
do take you, [BRIDE]
to be my lawful wedded wife;
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
until we are parted by death,
and this is my solemn vow.***

Two alternative legal forms of words which may be used instead...

***I [GROOM] take you, [BRIDE]
to be my wedded wife;
...to have and to hold... etc***

Or...

***I [GROOM] take thee, [BRIDE]
to be my wedded wife;
...to have and to hold... etc***

The couple may now loose hands.

The Giving of the Rings.

The rings are handed to the minister, who then prays.

The Groom then places the ring on the fourth finger of the bride's left hand, and repeats after the minister (or reads, or recites them from memory):

**I give you this ring
as a sign of our marriage.
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.**

Where there are two rings, the bride then does the same.

Declaration of Marriage

The minister joins their hands and says:

In the presence of God and of this congregation [GROOM] and [BRIDE] have given their consent and made their marriage vows to each other. They have symbolised their marriage by joining hands and by giving and receiving rings. I therefore pronounce them husband and wife, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together, let no one separate.

The couple may kiss.

Hymn

The couple may be seated after this hymn, if they wish.

The Wedding Sermon

Prayers

These are said by the Minister, and are prayers for the couple, their families, friends, and any future children they may have. If there are particular circumstances that you would like included in these prayers, or if there are difficulties that would best not be mentioned, please let us know.

These prayers conclude with the Lord's Prayer.

Hymn

At the end of this hymn the couple and the witnesses proceed to the table to sign the register.

The Signing of the Register

The signing of the register will take place in church, in full view of the whole congregation. You are responsible for checking that the details are correct before you sign. Two people must witness your signatures and sign the registers themselves. During this time there will be music playing quietly in the background.

The Groom signs first, and then the Bride and witnesses. (For the sake of making future copies, we also ensure their names are recorded legibly at some point !) It would normally take about 20 minutes to make all three copies in the Marriage Registers, which is why some parts may be written in advance *provided the Minister is confident that the couple will turn up!*

After the service you will be given a copy of your Wedding Certificate which you will have just signed. This is an important legal document which you need to take care of.

The Blessing

When the Registers have been duly completed, the Wedding Party assemble at the front of the platform, ready to leave. When all is ready, the Minister prays...

**[GROOM] and [BRIDE], and all who are gathered here today:
May the Lord bless you and keep you,
the Lord turn His face toward you and be gracious to you,
the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon you
and give you peace;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be among you and remain with you always. Amen.**

Procession down the aisle!

The (hopefully!) happy couple process down the aisle, followed by their bridesmaids, parents, etc. and face an onslaught of confetti (and maybe rice) outside the church building. Yes, we are quite happy for guests to throw confetti here, so long as it is outside!

The Wedding Day

The groom and Best Man should arrive at least 30 minutes before the wedding. This gives time for any photographs and to check the entries in the Marriage Registers.

The bride should plan to arrive about 5-10 minutes before the start of the service. This gives the photographer sufficient time for photographs. The bride will then be ready to come up the aisle on time!

Possible Hymns

Choosing hymns for your wedding depends a lot on who will be there, what hymns they will know and your own preferences! For couples who do not usually worship at a Church, the pool from which your hymns are chosen might become a little restricted.

The best and easiest way to decide on your hymns is to join us for worship on a few Sunday mornings or evenings. That way, you get the chance to hear what some of the hymns sound like (so you know whether you like them or not). It also means that, come the Big Day, being in the Church building is not totally strange to you. It will help you to relax for the wedding.

Usually, couples will choose to have two or three hymns. Sometimes there have been more, and occasionally just the one.

Musical Voluntaries

At several points during the service some voluntary music is played. The two key moments are the entrance of the bride, and at the end when you process out together.

There are several pieces of classical music which are often chosen, and it is also possible use other, suitable, recorded music if there is a tune that is particularly significant and appropriate for the occasion.

Possible Bible Readings

The following readings are especially suitable for use during a wedding. We use the 'New International Version' (NIV), a modern translation into understandable English. You are quite welcome to borrow a copy while you look through the passages. There is an index near the front if you have difficulty locating a particular passage.



Usually people have only the one reading, but you are very welcome to have two if you would like. The Minister is quite happy to discuss which reading(s) you would like to use. Some of the readings that people choose include:

Book	Chapter	Verses
1 Corinthians	13	1 - 8, & 13
Ephesians	5	1 - 2 & 21 - 33
John	2	1-11
Colossians	3	12 - 17
Ecclesiastes	4	9 - 12
Song of Songs	8	6 - 7

Service Sheets

Often couples find it helpful to have sheets for their guests, showing the outline for the service and including all the words for the hymns. Some choose to prepare their own sheets, while others use professional services. We are also able to provide service sheets for a small charge.

Flowers

Most couples like to see the church sanctuary decorated with flowers for their wedding. We do usually have flowers in the church for the Sunday, and we can arrange for these to be in place before your wedding at no extra charge.

Alternatively, you may like to have flowers decorating the place especially for the wedding. If so, you will need to arrange that yourself, and the person will need to liaise about access for doing the arranging.

Confetti

We are happy for confetti to be used at the wedding, with two conditions. Out of consideration for our neighbours confetti may only be thrown on the lawn at the front of the church. And out of consideration for the environment all confetti must be biodegradable.

We trust that you will make sure your guests (and the photographer!) are aware of these requirements.

Photography

We are very happy to have photographs and video recordings taken of the wedding. When the official photographer arrives we can discuss the best places for photography in the church sanctuary. However, this is a sacred occasion, and we do ask that flash photography is not used until the Register is being signed, as it can be a distraction.

Please note that video recordings may require a wedding video license from www.wvrl.co.uk. Responsibility for the legality of any recordings rests *entirely* with yourself and your guests.

Children

Children are very welcome here. We've all been children, and many of us have experienced the joys and distractions of parenthood. If any of your guests have children, we are more than happy for them to share in this happy day. And if the children do drive their parents to distraction, we are quite happy for a discreet amount of coming and going to help them cope.

Rehearsal

We find it helpful to have a rehearsal for the wedding. This usually takes place the day before the wedding, and simply gives everyone the chance to walk through the service. It means people know where they will be standing, and when to sit down, and therefore it helps them (and you) to relax and enjoy the occasion.

Costs

We charge a single fee of £285 for a wedding (which is only 2/3 of the Church of England's fees!). The first £50 is a non-refundable Booking Fee payable in advance. The balance is due at or before the rehearsal.

This includes payments for the use of the church sanctuary, any necessary heating, caretaking before and afterwards, the time taken by the Minister and Organist in preparing for and officiating at your wedding, and a copy of your marriage certificate.

Service Sheets, if desired, are optional extras on top of the basic fee.

The Register Office and the Law

You are legally required to obtain a certificate authorising the marriage from the Register Office, and the wedding must take place between 16 days and one year after giving notice.

By law a marriage cannot take place without this certificate.

You will need to telephone the Registrar (49 Lockyer Street, Plymouth 268331) to book an appointment - they will be able to tell you what papers, if any, you will need to take with you.

Legal information is also available on the www.gov.uk website.

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