

Q/ Where can I get married?

A/ Everyone lives in a parish and belongs to a parish church. That's the church you should contact for more information about getting married. However, we know that you might like to marry in a different church because it has special significance for you through family or other special connections. An engaged couple can now do just that if either of you can show just one of the following seven connections with the parish.

That one of you:

- was baptised in the parish concerned or
- was prepared for confirmation in the parish or
- has at any time lived in the parish for a period of at least 6 months or
- has at any time regularly gone to normal church services in the parish church for a period of at least 6 months or

That one of your parents, at any time after you were born:

- has lived in the parish for a period of at least 6 months or
- has regularly gone to normal church services in the parish church for a period of at least 6 months or

That one of your parents or grandparents:

- was married in the parish

In all cases involving church services - i.e. going to normal church services, baptism, confirmation or marriage - this applies only to Church of England services.

Q/ I'm not baptised. I don't go to church. Can I still get married in church?

A/ Yes! Normally the parish priest will want to get to know you a bit and might ask you to some preparation meetings or church services before you get married.

Q/ How do I book the church?

A/ Booking is easy. Simply get in touch with your local Vicar. He or she will probably wish to meet with you in person to discuss your plans and get to know you a little before the wedding.

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.

Q/ Do we have to register our marriage at the local Register Office?

A/ No. All Church of England Ministers act as registrars on the day of your marriage and your marriage is registered on the day you get married by him or her.

Q/ Can I choose what kind of service I want?

A/ You can choose to have a modern language service or one in more traditional language including the Book of Common Prayer service. 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 will probably 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 small fee to pay: ask your parish priest about this.

Q/ I'm Church of England and he's a Catholic. Does that matter?

A/ It doesn't matter from the Church of England's perspective. Anyone is welcome to be married in their local CoFE parish church. (A complication would only arise if one of you has been married before.)

If one of you is a Roman Catholic and you want the Roman Catholic Church to recognise your marriage, you will need to seek the advice of your Roman Catholic priest about the permission required for marrying a non-Roman Catholic. Some clergy encourage couples in this situation to involve the Catholic priest in the marriage service too. See www.interchurchfamilies.org.uk for more information.

Q/ What if one of us is divorced?

A/ The Church of England agreed in 2002 that divorced people could remarry in church under certain circumstances. We believe that marriage is for life, but also recognise that sadly, some marriages do fail. Speak to your Vicar about your situation and there may well be a way forward. He or she will want to talk to you frankly about your past and your hopes for the future and will let you know whether they can remarry you. Even if it is not possible to do your wedding, they may offer you a service of prayer and dedication after a civil ceremony. A helpful resource, Marriage in church after divorce, is available on the Church of England website.

Q/ What happens if one of us is a foreign national?

A/ The Church of England has a responsibility to conduct marriages which will be recognised in the country the bride or groom comes from. This is done for the couple's benefit not just for bureaucracy. If one of you is a national of a country outside Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the EU or USA, the Church of England's Faculty Office strongly recommends that these marriages should be done by Common Licence rather than banns. Some dioceses also ask the person to obtain from the relevant embassy or consulate a letter saying their marriage will be recognised.

www.cofe.anglican.org/lifeevents/weddings/