

## Ephesians 5:21 – 33

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church - for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.



weddings at  
st mary's  
wootton  
guide for couples

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Here are some suggestions of bible passages suitable for a wedding service (others are available from Peter Ackroyd).

### Genesis 2:18-25

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

### John 2:1- 11

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

"Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied, "My time has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realise where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

Our organist recommends the following music:

## Arrival of the Bride

Bridal chorus from 'Lohengrin'	R Wagner
Prince of Denmark's March	J Clarke
Trumpet Tune in D	H Purcell
Prelude to Te Deum	M Charpentier
Organ Sonata No 2 – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Movement	F Mendelssohn

## During the signing of the register

Jesu, Joy if Man's Desiring	J S Bach
Canon in D	J Pachelbel
Air from the 'Water Music'	G Handel
Air in F & Gavotte in F	Wesley

## Exit of the Wedding Couple

Wedding March from 'Midsummer Night's Dream'	F Mendelssohn
Trumpet Voluntary	J Stanley
March from the Overture to the 'Occasional Oratorio'	G Handel
Tuba Tune	C Lang
Chorale Improvisation on 'Nun Danket'	S Karg-Elert
Grand March from 'Aida'	G Verdi
Toccata and Fugue in D Minor	J S Bach

## Other music suitable before the arrival of the Bride or during the signing of the register

Minuet & Aria from the 'Water Music'	G Handel
Passepied	G Handel
Gavotte from the Holberg Suite	E Greig
Tambourin	F Gossec
Short Prelude and Fugue in F BWV 556	JS Bach
Toccata and Fugue in D minor	JS Bach
Gavotte	W Boyce

# 1. Introduction

At St Mary's we love to help couples preparing for marriage in any way we can. I hope this guide gives you an insight into what we offer. Your wedding day is far more than just a one off celebration. It's a life-changing declaration before God, family and friends that you are committed to each other for life.

If you choose St Mary's for your wedding, you'll be married in a Christian service, in which God's purposes for marriage are joyfully celebrated. Even so, weddings vary vastly in size, type, look and feel. Whichever style you decide upon, it is our aim to help you prepare not only for what we hope will be a most special day, but for your marriage as a whole. After all, 'your wedding is one day - your marriage is a lifetime'.

In the following sections you will find spiritual and practical information suitable both for those who are very clear on what lies ahead and for those couples who might want a little more help.

Of course, marriage isn't just a wedding day commitment. It's a lifetime of commitment to each other. It's about sacrificial love – love which is always looking for ways to build up and give to the other. That's the love God shows us in Jesus. Jesus was willing to sacrifice his life—so that we could be forgiven and know God personally. It's this God of love to whom wedding couples declare their commitment and from whom married couples receive the inspiration to live it out.

St Mary's aim is to provide the opportunity to explore this God of love. Our motto is 'Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known.' So we try to offer something for everyone on the journey to discovering and knowing God. If you're not already a member, why not come along on a Sunday morning, or join one of our regular evening groups exploring Christianity through videos and discussion?

I hope you find reading this guide useful and enjoyable as you prepare for both wedding and marriage. May God bless you in your new life together.

Peter Ackroyd (Vicar)

## 2. So you want to get married ...

We see marriage in films and read about it in romantic novels, but what's the real story? As the credits roll after *Four Weddings and a Funeral* or the final episode of *Pride and Prejudice* are we really any the wiser?

Marriage is about life and about commitment. Take a moment to ask yourselves the following types of questions:

### Why do you want to get married?

The Bible teaches us to hold marriage in very high regard. It's God's good and kind gift to us, and is not just for our own private benefit but for the good of all. In fact, God intends the union that marriage creates to reflect the magnificent and beautiful union between Jesus Christ and his people, the church. Marriage is the lifelong union of a man and a woman so getting married changes your relationship – for one thing, it closes the door on opting out if things get difficult.

Marriage is about committing to stay together whatever. That's what the promises you make to each other are all about and that's why marriage is such a special gift from God. You are weaving your destiny with that of another person for your whole earthly life together – entwining your hopes and dreams with another person. So the most important thing we can do to support your marriage is to point you to the supreme example of loving, sacrificial, selfless commitment: to Jesus Christ and his teachings in the Bible. This is how you will grow in your relationship with Christ and with each other.

### Why do you want to get married in a church?

By choosing a church wedding, you are involving God as part of your married lives. The wedding service embodies the Christian understanding of marriage. There is no better one, so spending some time thinking it through will not only enhance your wedding day, it will also be a great preparation for marriage. Amongst the wedding lists, florists, relatives and honeymoons this might seem the last thing you want to be grappling with, but we would encourage you to think together about the reality of this commitment.



## Appendix 2. Wedding hymns & music

Here are the first lines of some hymns suitable for a wedding service:

### **Amazing grace -**

how sweet the sound  
that saved a wretch like me !

### **Dear Lord and Father of mankind,**

forgive our foolish ways;  
re-clothe us in our rightful mind;  
in purer lives thy service find,  
in deeper reverence, praise.

### **Give me oil in my lamp,** keep me burning,

give me oil in my lamp I pray;  
give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning,  
keep me burning till the break of day.

### **Great is thy faithfulness,** O God my Father,

there is no shadow of turning with thee;  
Thou changest not,  
thy compassions they fail not,  
as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be.

### **I will sing the wondrous story**

of the Christ who died for me,  
how he left the realms of glory  
for the cross on Calvary.

### **Immortal, invisible, God only wise,**

in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
most blessed, most glorious,  
the Ancient of Days,  
almighty, victorious,  
thy great name we praise.

### **Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us,**

O'er the world's tempestuous sea;

### **Love divine,** all loves excelling

joy of heaven, to earth come down;  
fix in us your humble dwelling,  
all your faithful mercies crown.

### **O praise ye the Lord!**

Praise him in the height;  
rejoice in his word, ye angels of light;

### **O worship the King,** all-glorious above;

O gratefully sing his power and his love;

### **Praise my soul the king of heaven**

to his feet your tribute bring  
ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
who like me his praise should sing?  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
praise the everlasting king!

### **Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,**

the King of creation;  
O my soul, praise him,  
for he is thy health and salvation;

### **The Lord's my Shepherd,** I'll not want;

he makes me down to lie  
in pastures green;  
he leadeth me the quiet waters by.

### **Tell out, my soul,**

### **the greatness of the Lord;**

unnumbered blessings  
give my spirit voice;  
tender to me the promise of his word;  
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

### **The King of love my Shepherd is,**

whose goodness faileth never;  
I nothing lack if I am his  
and he is mine for ever.



## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Fees (2024)

#### Statutory

Publication of Banns	-	£36.00
Marriage Service	-	£531.00

Local		
Verger	-	£50.00
Sound Operator	-	£22.00

#### Optional Extras

Organist	-	£84.00
Singing Group	-	£84.00
Heating (if required)	-	£84.00

## 3. Preparing for the day

Wedding preparations can become an all-engulfing exercise. As a couple, you must be comfortable with what is planned and remember at all times that this is **your day**. Whilst keeping in mind that your family will naturally want to be involved to help you with the arrangements, ask yourselves how **you** want to remember the day. Making arrangements in plenty of time and thinking through all the aspects thoroughly will mean that when the day comes both you and your guests will be much more likely to relax and enjoy it!

The following aims to help with the practical details:

### 3.1 Arranging a day

The most important part of your wedding day will be the ceremony. Before arranging anything else, approach St Mary's through the Church Office (765375) or the Vicar, Peter Ackroyd (768391). Securing your day is not like any other booking as there are a number of factors to consider:

### Wootton & Stewartby residents

The very first thing you need to establish is whether one of you lives in the ecclesiastical parish of Wootton (which includes Stewartby). Provided one of you is resident (and neither of you are divorced with a former partner still living), you are entitled to be married at St Mary's.

### Non-residents

**(a) church members** If neither of you live in the parish you can marry at St Mary's if at least one of you is an active church member, accepted onto the church electoral roll (and neither of you are divorced with a former partner still living). You qualify for this by attending church services regularly for at least six months. If you are not currently a member we would encourage you to attend one of our Christianity Explored courses alongside church attendance.

**(b) Others** Non residents who do not qualify for electoral roll membership can still marry at St. Mary's provided they can show a 'qualifying connection' with the church (and neither of you are divorced with a former partner still living). This means that one or both of you

- has been baptised or confirmed through St. Mary's; or
- has lived in the parish for at least six months; or



- has ever worshipped at St. Mary's for at least six months; or
- had a parent who lived in the parish or worshipped at St. Mary's for at least six months during your lifetime; or
- have parents or grandparent who were married at St. Mary's

## Minors

If the bride or groom will be under eighteen years of age, a letter of consent signed by a parent or guardian is required.

## Date and time

Provided you meet or expect to meet these conditions, the next step is to fill in an Application Form to be married at St Mary's. We are happy to give an informal indication of whether the church is available on a particular date ahead of receiving this. However, it is important that no final arrangements are made until we have received the completed form and confirmed in writing to you that the church is booked for a specific date and time.

## 3.2 The Banns of Marriage

Banns are a verbal, legal notice of your intention to marry. Banns exist to confirm that both of you are free to marry, ie, that neither of you is already married. In the past, the local community would have gathered together every Sunday morning and the reading of the banns at church provided an opportunity for those who knew the individuals best to reveal any secrets! Nowadays it sometimes seems a bit quaint, but the reading of banns is still a vital legal preliminary to marriage (there are alternatives for emergencies and special cases, at greater expense!). Banns are read on three Sundays at some point during the three months immediately preceding your wedding day.

An application to marry at St Mary's will ensure that banns are read here in due course. However, if either or both of you are resident in another Church of England parish you **must** also have your banns read in that/those parish churches. This is your responsibility to arrange. You need to apply direct to the vicar of the relevant parishes, who will require you to complete an application form and also require a fixed fee! After the banns have been called three times, you should collect a certificate from the parish: this must be produced at your wedding rehearsal.



## 4. The Ceremony itself!

Your wedding day will arrive quicker than you think and will be anticipated by all your friends and family who are invited to join in. So what should you expect from your day?

Arriving at the church: First to arrive should be the ushers, if you are having them. Their responsibilities stretch to understanding how to get your guests into the church and into their seats, directing guests of the bride and groom to their appropriate sides of the church (normally bride's guests to the left and groom's to the right) and the safekeeping of any presents left at the service. Please ensure that your ushers understand and embrace their responsibilities fully. There will be a vergers on hand to help.

The groom and best man should be at the church at least 15 minutes before the ceremony.

Next to arrive will be the bridesmaids and the bride's mother followed by the bride, accompanied by her father or the person who is giving her away. There is a notion that the bride should be late – this is in practice somewhat inconsiderate to your guests and the church. However, there is normally a short delay once the bride has arrived for photographs and final adjustments to hair etc! When the bride is ready, the congregation will be asked to stand, and the service begins.

After the service ends, there is a brief pause while the Marriage Document is completed in the vestry. Then the bride and groom lead the congregation out of church and into the churchyard, where photographs are normally taken.

## 5. The Last Word

Marriage is a great gift from God – a unique combining of two people's lives for life. Do make time in the midst of the preparations to prepare yourself for the day – remember: it's your day, so enjoy!

## Photographer

Most couples choose to have aspects of their wedding recorded photographically for posterity, and St Mary's lends itself to photographs very well. You are free to use any part of the churchyard for photographs before and after the ceremony, with the exception of the Garden of Remembrance in the north-east corner (since this is used for the interment of ashes). During the service itself, discreet photography is permissible by prior arrangement. When the service is over and the registers have been completed, photographs may be taken within the building. Please draw these guidelines to the attention of your photographer, as it is important that no misunderstanding arises which could disrupt the service. Please also ask your photographer to make time to see the minister taking your service before the ceremony commences.

## Video cameraman

An official video may be recorded by prior arrangement. We will advise the cameraman where he/she should stand to avoid being intrusive. Informal videos and photography during the service are not allowed: This will be mentioned at the beginning of the service.

## Confetti

We will also mention at the start of the service that we do not allow confetti in the church or churchyard.

## Changing your name

Should you be going on honeymoon immediately after your wedding day and want to have the name on your passport changed beforehand, we can sign the appropriate form for you.

## Fees

See appendix 1 for details of fees currently payable for weddings at St. Mary's. We will confirm to you the exact amount due once all the arrangements are made. Fees are payable in full a fortnight before the wedding, by cheque payable to 'St. Mary's Wootton PCC' or by BACS: Sort Code: 23-05-80 Account no 32731122 Metro Bank (ref; your surname).

## 3.3 Registering a Marriage

From 4th May 2021 the registration of marriages has been changed by the General Registrars Office. The new registration process will enable all marriages to be recorded and stored online. As the changes were being considered, it was also an opportunity to enable the details of mothers and step-parents to be included on the marriage certificate for the first time. On your wedding day, instead of signing a Marriage Register or being given a Marriage Certificate - you will be asked to sign a Marriage Document, an A4 document that will be sent to the Registrars Office in Bedford by the vicar after your wedding. You will then need to contact the Registrars Office to obtain your Marriage Certificate. This can be done as soon as the Marriage Document has been received by the Registrar's Office.

## 3.4 Preparation

We hope that all couples getting married here feel that St Mary's is their church – full of people they know and will be keeping in contact with. The best way of building your relationship with St Mary's is to come on Sundays at 10am and get to know the place and the people. In addition to this we offer specific opportunities to get prepared:

- Peter Ackroyd, the Vicar, will arrange to meet with you around seven or eight months before the wedding to discuss the practical arrangements. A further meeting is normally held around three months before the ceremony, to finalise details of the order of service (before you get the service sheets printed!).
- You will probably be invited to an evening for couples soon to be married so you can meet others in the local area at the same stage. The evening provides an opportunity to think about how to build a great marriage, through a combination of group discussion and input from church members. There will also be books available on building a healthy marriage.



- A wedding rehearsal will be arranged during the week before the ceremony. The rehearsal gives you and your wedding party an opportunity to walk through the service from the arrival of the groom to your departure from the church as husband and wife. Please do your best to have every member of the wedding party at your rehearsal to ensure your service runs as smoothly as possible on the day. Usually, a rehearsal runs for about an hour.

### 3.5 Which service?

Weddings at St Mary's are Church of England services. While there is some flexibility on details, you will be therefore be married using either the modern 'Common Worship' service or the traditional Book of Common Prayer service. The choice is for you to make with the vicar.

Other details to discuss with the minister taking your wedding include:

- How would you like to be addressed during the service?
- Will you "love and cherish" or would the bride rather "love, cherish and obey"? Obviously this must be discussed between yourselves and clarified well before the day.
- Will you both be receiving rings?

The real area in which you can shape the service is what we put into it in terms of music, hymns, readings etc.

### Music

It is not essential to have music but in practice everyone does! At St Mary's we have an organist and you can also book our singing group (for more modern Christian songs). Thought needs to be given to the music to be played as the bride enters and as bride and groom leave the church, and to the hymns you intend to sing. If the majority of your guests don't attend church regularly, and aren't used to singing hymns, it might be sensible to keep the number of hymns down to two. Alternatively, if your guests are regular churchgoers you might want to include some more modern songs as well. Examples of some popular hymns are included at appendix 2. Do get general advice from the vicar, but in terms of choosing music for entering and leaving church and hymns please speak to the organist (see page 9). As the service is a Christian service all the music must be compatible with Christian faith, and is therefore subject to the vicar's approval.

## Wedding readings

- **Readings:** The Wedding Service includes one or two Bible readings. Some appropriate readings are listed below. We will run through some suggested readings when we meet up with you.
- **Order of Service:** If you intend to have a printed order of service, we need to see and approve it in draft before the printer is instructed to proceed. This will ensure that the correct order is followed and nothing important omitted!

### 3.6 Other choices and arrangements

#### Organ

John Robertson is the organist at St Mary's and he is responsible for providing music for your wedding. John can be contacted on 01234 767507. For the Singing Group, please speak to the vicar.

#### Flowers

St Mary's can quote for a range of flowers for the bridal party and floral arrangements that can be used both in the church and transferred to your reception.

Alternatively if you wish you can arrange your own florist, we can organise for them to have access to the church before your wedding and give guidelines on what fixings should be used to avoid damage to the fabric of the church building and furniture.

St Mary's requests that a pedestal and memorial arrangement be left in church after your wedding for the congregation at the next Sunday service to enjoy.

Please contact Alison Thompson to confirm your wedding flower plans as early as possible so that dates can be reserved.

Tel: 07836 231722 or email: althomo60@gmail.com

