



WEDDINGS

AT

stmary's
wootton

A Guide for
Couples

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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.

.....

(Vicar)



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.

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:

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, (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.



Securing a Date & Time

Provided you meet or expect to meet those 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.

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.

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.

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:

....., 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.

Which service?

Weddings at St Mary's are Church of England services. While there is some flexibility on details, you will 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.

Wedding readings

Readings: The Wedding Service includes one or two Bible readings. Some appropriate readings are listed at the end of this booklet. 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!

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 and music are included in this guide. Do get general advice from the vicar. 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.

For the Organist or Singing Group, please speak to the vicar.

Flowers

You will need to 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. They should contact the Church Office 765375 (on Tuesdays & Thursdays) at least 3 weeks before the wedding. Your florist should leave the church tidy after arrangements are installed. You will also need to arrange for someone to remove any arrangements you wish to take away, usually whilst the photos are being taken immediately after the service, before the church building is locked.

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.

Videos

An official video may be recorded by prior arrangement. We will advise the camera operator where to 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.

2026 Fees

See below 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).

Statutory

Publication of Banns	£39.00
Marriage Service	£566.00

Local

Verger	£52.00
Sound Operator	£23.00

Optional Extras

Organist	£87.00
Singing Group	£87.00
Heating (if required)	£87.00





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 verger 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.



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!

Wedding hymns

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.



Wedding 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 – 3rd 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 (Midsummer Night's Dream)

F Mendelssohn

Trumpet Voluntary *J Stanley*

March: 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 Gosssec*

Short Prelude and Fugue in F BWV 556

JS Bach

Toccata and Fugue in D minor *JS Bach*

Gavotte *W Boyce*

Wedding readings

Here are some suggestions of bible passages suitable for a wedding service (others are available from Peter Ackroyd). Visit www.biblegateway.com to look up the passages.

Genesis 2:18-25

John 2:1- 11

Ephesians 5:21 – 33

