

Getting married at St Mary The Boltons

Welcome and congratulations on your decision to be married, and to have your wedding here at St Mary's. We look forward both to helping you plan a happy wedding day, and to prepare you both for a happy marriage, as well. The Vicar will meet with you a few times, to prepare the necessary paperwork, to discuss what marriage is all about, and to plan the wedding service itself.

This pack is an introductory guide which we hope will answer any initial questions you might have.

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Frequently asked questions

1. What form of Service should we have? Our normal practice is to use the modern Church of England service, which is relatively formal, but includes options for readings, hymns and other music, which can make the service feel more personal.

2. Do we need to have an Order of Service sheet? Not necessarily, but it can help to give a sense of what will happen in the service, as well as details of the readings and the prayers and hymns that your congregation will join in with.

Some couples choose to print all the words said by the minister and the couple, and this can be helpful for people who are hard of hearing, or for whom English is not a first language. Others like the simplicity of including headings only, with the words which the congregation says or sings printed in full. We'll be glad to show you examples of each format.

Your Order can be printed professionally and personalised with images, or more simply by our church office. Please let us see the final draft of your order of service in good time so that we can pick up on any formatting issues or errors before you go to print.

You'll need to print a few extra copies for the choir and organist, as well as the vicar.

3. Who will be taking our service? Our vicar will normally take the service. Other authorised Church of England clergy may take a role in the service by arrangement and pending permission from the Bishop's office.

4. Does the bride have to be 'given away'? If so, must it be done by her father? The answer is no, it is not necessary for anyone to give the bride away, unless that is what you desire.

Sometimes a member of the family or a friend walks down the aisle with the bride, or she can walk in alone or accompanied by a bridesmaid. If desired, the bride and groom can enter together. As long as you both arrive at the front to be married, that's what matters!

5. Should we have ushers? Ushers are needed to hand out service sheets and any buttonholes, to show people to their seats and generally to look after people as they arrive. After the service they are needed to check that no cameras and other belongings have been left behind in the pews.

6. Do we need witnesses? Yes, you need two witnesses, both over the age of 18 and who understand English. They will need to sign the Marriage Document along with the bride, the groom and the officiating minister. The bride signs using her maiden name.

7. Can we have the church bells rung? We only have one bell at St Mary's! We will be glad to ring it before your service, to summon your guests to church but sadly we cannot provide a great celebratory peal as you leave!

8. Can we have a choir? Yes, you can. A choir is not essential but they will help lead the singing of the hymns, as well as singing an anthem (if you want one) while you are signing your marriage documents. Our Director of Music will speak with you about your music, and will book any singers or other musicians needed. Please do not book your own singers or musicians. Recorded music is not permitted.

9. Will there be a rehearsal before our wedding day? Yes, usually during the same week of the wedding. Strictly speaking, only the bride and groom have to be present, but anyone playing an important part in the service is welcome to come along. The rehearsal is really about choreography to make sure everyone feels confident about what will happen on the wedding day – and a chance to practise saying your vows to each other.

10. When should the bride, groom and ushers arrive on the day? Wedding guests tend to arrive quite early, so it's best if the ushers arrive at least 30 minutes before the service to greet them and make sure they find their seats. While it is traditional for the bride's party to sit on the left and the groom's on the right, this does not have to be the case; it is perfectly fine (and simpler) if everyone sits together.

The bridegroom and best man should arrive at least 20 minutes before the service.

The bride's party should arrive no later than 5 or even 10 minutes before the service – so that the wedding can start on time. This gives time for photos to be taken on arrival and to have a quiet moment in the porch to calm last minute nerves!

Be aware that if the service starts more than 30 minutes late because of the bride's late arrival, you may find your musicians will leave for their next engagement, or you'll be charged an extra fee for their time.

If you are using cars between home and church, please check whether there are any additional hazards such as Chelsea football teams playing at home.

11. Can photographs be taken during the marriage service? No, not by members of the congregation. This is so that your guests can attend to the service, and join in fully and without distraction.

You may plan to hire a photographer who will want to take photographs during the service. They should contact the vicar before the wedding day, to agree where they can take photographs during the service. Once the Service is over, photographs can be taken of you leaving the church and, of course, outside.

12. Can we record the service, or live-stream it? Yes, but bear in mind that the fee increases for each musician (Director of Music, organist and choir) if you do. The videographer should be in touch with the minister before the wedding day, and should arrive in good time on the day to set up their equipment. They should remain in the same place throughout the service.

13. How long will the church service last? Usually between 45 and 60 minutes, depending on how many readings and hymns you have.

14. Can our guests throw confetti? Yes, as long as it's outdoors. Confetti must be biodegradable like tissue paper or flower petals.

15. Is there room for parking? The church cannot offer parking except for people who require access because of mobility issues, by arrangement. Please let us know in good time if you need to reserve up to two spaces.

We are about 10 minutes walk from both Earls Court and Gloucester Road underground stations, and there are buses on Fulham Road and Old Brompton Road. Taxis should be told to come to the west entrance, opposite number 23 The Boltons. There is a car park at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital.

16. When will we receive our marriage certificate? We no longer issue marriage certificates after weddings. Your marriage must now be registered at the RBKC Register Office at Chelsea Old Town Hall, and certificates can be obtained there for a statutory fee. We normally return the signed marriage documents to the Registrar within a week of your wedding.

If at any point in the future you need a duplicate certificate, this can be obtained from the local Register Office.

If you plan to go away on honeymoon to a country that requires evidence of marriage to allow you, for example, to stay in the same hotel room, we will be able to issue you an 'Acknowledgement of Marriage' certificate but do be aware that this is not a legal document and so may not be regarded as evidence of marriage. You may wish to delay holidaying in such a country until you have your marriage certificate.

17. How much will a wedding in church cost? In the grand scheme of things, a church wedding is relatively inexpensive:

2024 Statutory fees include

Church fee	£531
Banns fee	<u>£36</u>
Total statutory fees	£567

Optional Extras (2024)

Heating the church in winter months	£190
Music (payable to the Director of Music)	
Organ only	£283
Organ and soloist	£518
Organ and 5 voices	£993 (or 4 voices £870 but SSATB to be preferred in most cases)
Organ, separate conductor, Octet	£1590
Organ, separate conductor, octet (including soloist)	£1659
Recording fee	£79.22 per musician, organist, conductor
Sourcing of musical scores	variable

17. Anything else? If you have any additional queries, do call or email the Parish Office.

The legal requirements

Qualifying to be married at St Mary's

Do we have to be baptised or confirmed to get married in the Church of England? No, anyone may be married in a CofE church, regardless of religious background, assuming a Qualifying Connection can be found – see below. However, we are always willing to discuss the possibility of baptism and/or confirmation with anyone who wants to learn more about the Christian faith.

How can we qualify to get married at St Mary The Boltons? There are various ways in which you can qualify, as set down by law:

If you live within the parish you have an automatic right to be married at St Mary's. You can check which parish you live in by looking at www.achurchnearyou.com and typing in the postcode of your residence. Be aware that your parish church may not be the church closest to your home!

Qualifying Historical Connection A person has a Qualifying Connection with a parish if that person can produce evidence that he or she

- was baptised in the parish (this does not apply where the baptism formed part of a combined service of baptism or confirmation); or
- had his or her confirmation entered in a church register book of a church or chapel in the parish; or
- has at any time had his or her usual place of residence in the parish for at least six months; or
- has at any time habitually attended public worship in the parish for at least six months; or
- a parent of that person has at any time during that person's lifetime had his or her usual place of residence in the parish for at least six months; or habitually attended public worship in the parish for at least six months; or
- a parent or grandparent of that person was married in the parish.

If none of these applies to you, all you need to do is attend St Mary's on a Sunday morning at least twice a month for 6 months. This will establish us as the church you belong to by attendance. We hope that it will also result in your continuing to come to church after you are married! Be aware that we cannot formally book your wedding until you've completed the 6 months attendance, and you'll need to leave another 4 weeks minimum before your wedding can take place. We will pencil your date into our diary, meanwhile, but a firm booking will depend on your coming to church services.

You will need to show the Vicar your passport and proof of residence with address.

If one or both of you has been divorced, the Vicar will want to discuss with you how the previous marriage went wrong, how you will approach similar issues in the new marriage, and the needs and concerns of any children from a previous marriage or relationship. If the Vicar is happy to proceed, then you can be married by banns under the same qualifying conditions as above. We will need to see a certified copy of your Decree Absolute – a Decree Nisi is not acceptable.

Giving notice of the marriage

By Banns: These are the means by which the Church publicises your intention to be married. Notice of your intention to marry is announced in church on three successive Sundays at the main morning service, within the three months prior to your wedding day. We encourage couples to attend at least once to hear their banns read – firstly to assure them that we've not forgotten, and second to let them know that the church is remembering them in prayer as they prepare to be married.

In the case of couples attending for 6 months to establish your qualifying connection, be sure, when making your plans, to allow at least three Sundays afterwards for banns to be read.

Banns must be read at St Mary's, as well as in any other parish where the bride or groom is resident – so potentially in three places. It's your responsibility to make sure that your banns are called in the parish where each of you lives. To prove that your banns have been called in the other parish(es), you'll need a Banns Certificate from the Vicar of that parish. We need it before the wedding rehearsal, or we cannot go ahead with the wedding.

If you are not members of the Church of England you can still be married at St Mary's. Everyone has the right to be married in their parish church. If one of you belongs to another faith, i.e not Christian, then it is still possible for you to get married in church, but you should be aware that the Marriage Service is a service of Christian worship according to the Church of England.

If either or both of you does not have British citizenship, then the preliminaries prior to marriage in church are a little different:

- If one/both of the couple is an EEA citizen with pre-settled or settled status, you may be married by Banns.
- If one/both of the couple is an EEA citizen without pre-settled or settled status, or a citizen of another country, you will need to obtain a Marriage Schedule from the Register Office. You need first to confirm with us that we are able to marry you, and to book a date. You will then need to make an appointment with the RBKC Register Office. They will interview you to ensure that the marriage is genuine. If they do not object, they send us a Marriage Schedule which we will sign at the wedding. It is worth arranging this meeting with the Register Office in good time before your wedding, as the Home Office can choose to investigate proposed marriages for up to 70 days.

If banns cannot be read or are defective A common licence will be required when banns cannot be read because one of the couple is resident abroad or where the reading of the banns was defective.

If you are temporarily in the parish Those who are only temporarily in the parish (at least 15 days) can be married by Common Licence.

Other cases There is also a special Archbishop's Licence available for those who cannot satisfy the 15 day residence requirement for a Common Licence but who have strong ties with the parish and have the support and permission of the Vicar. This is usually sought in an emergency only.

Planning your service

Wedding music

We will help you choose music that is right for your wedding. Whether you decide that the music should be simple or more elaborate, your choice of hymns and other pieces will be made by you, in consultation with the Director of Music and minister. If you have no idea what you want or are totally confused by what is available, we can suggest suitable pieces.

Music for your wedding is co-ordinated by the Director of Music who will be glad to offer suggestions for you to choose from. As part of your wedding preparation, you will be offered a consultation at the church to discuss music choices and to play through the options so you get an idea of how they will sound on the day. If you have suggestions about what you'd like, he can let you know if they will be suitable for a church ceremony.

In general, the entrance and exit music should be played on the organ rather than sung. The service is at heart a service of Christian worship, so pieces sung by the choir should be 'sacred' music, rather than 'secular'.

- Before the service starts, the organist will play between ten and twenty minutes of music as the guests arrive. Please let us know if there is something you would particularly like to be played at this point.
- We recommend that you choose a short processional piece for the entry of the bride and something suitably happy and jolly for when you leave the church.
- You might also like to choose music to be played or sung during the registration of the marriage – a piece lasting about four or five minutes is usually enough.
- There are other places in the service where further anthems or solo pieces can be included. The Director of Music and clergy will be happy to discuss these with you.

The Musicians

The number of musicians that you have performing for your wedding will depend very much on the music which you choose, the size of the event and your budget. It is always possible to find low-cost options which will work beautifully in the space.

- An organist is required to play the entry and exit pieces, accompany hymns and any other musical items. If you want your own organist to play (rather than ours) the full organist's fee is still payable to the Director of Music. Your choice of organist is subject to the approval of the Director of Music.
- In some cases, depending on the complexity of the music chosen, a conductor is required to direct the choir in addition to the organist. This is decided at the discretion of the Director of Music.
- A choir can be engaged to lead the hymn-singing and to perform choral works at the registration of the marriage and/or at other points in the service. The church uses fine professional singers who are selected by the Director of Music. Please don't book singers yourselves!

The number of singers needed will depend on the type of music which you would like at the wedding and on your budget. Four or five voices is often sufficient but the Director of Music will suggest more if necessary.

- If you would like some solo music to be sung/played at your wedding, you will need a soloist. The soloist can often be drawn from the choir, although that singer will need to be paid a soloist's fee.

The Director of Music will find and co-ordinate musicians for your wedding, source music where necessary, and organise rehearsal time. You may have a friend or family member whom you would like to have perform at your wedding, and this may be possible at the discretion of the Director of Music. Please ask him about this at your consultation.

Above all, enjoy choosing your wedding music. You don't have to choose things that are very well known, nor should you feel you have to be totally original. We are here to help and to make sure your music enriches your wedding service. Do please ask us for any help you may need.

Musicians' Fees

The range of fees for music is on page 4. Please note that singers and musicians need to be booked in good time, so do think about your music early, and finalise your choices as soon as you can – at least 4 weeks before your wedding. Musicians booked for your wedding may well have turned down other bookings, so if you cancel or change your mind, you may still have to pay their fee.

Please note that to make a video recording of your service you will be asked to pay a recording fee per performer, according to the Musicians' Union rates.

Hymns

Three hymns are usually sufficient and we recommend that they be broadly based around the themes of life, love and thanksgiving. There are plenty to choose from. You can find a selection here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/your-church-wedding/planning-your-ceremony/hymns-your-wedding>

We use the words from Hymns Ancient and Modern: Hymns and Songs for Refreshing Worship, which we can supply for your order of service. Please don't search for words via the internet as they can vary wildly!

Flowers

1. Please have your florist liaise with the Parish Office in good time to arrange access to the church, via 020 7835 1440 or office@stmarytheboltons.org.uk. They should make an arrangement to visit the church to see what is possible, and what is permissible.
2. We are very pleased to keep flowers in church for the following Sunday though we understand that you may want to take them on to your reception. In Lent and Advent all flowers must be removed before the Sunday. Winter flowers are very costly – you may want instead to use greenery and candles to decorate the church. Speak to us before you finalise your plans.
3. No flowers may be placed on the altar, or in the sanctuary. The windowsills may be decorated including with candles by arrangement. Flowers should not obscure the view of the ceremony, or obstruct access to the lectern, nor should they be placed in the aisles.
4. If an entrance arch is used, it must be free standing and not attached to the building in any way, nor should it block the entrance. It should be removed on the day of the wedding.

Printing

You may choose your own printers, or arrange for the Parish Office to print the orders of service. The final draft must be seen by the Vicar and the Director of Music before going to print. The final proof should be finalised two weeks before the wedding day.

Readings

There is a space in the wedding service for two readings. At least one must be from the Bible. Couples can choose whether to have two readings from the Bible, or one biblical reading and one non-biblical. Biblical readings that work well may be found here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/your-church-wedding/planning-your-ceremony/bible-readings-your-wedding>

A good source of ideas for non-scriptural readings is Mark Oakley, *Readings for Weddings* (SPCK, 2004), which is available cheaply second-hand online.

Orders of Service

The Vicar and the Parish Office can help you to put together an order of service as you prepare your wedding. We have template versions which you can fill in with your chosen readings, music etc.

Photographs & Video-recording

- Professional photographers must check, if possible before the day of the wedding with the minister where they may stand to take pictures. They should not use a flash or extra lighting, and the cameras should be as quiet as possible – a shutter noise can be surprisingly loud.
- Video or audio recording is not allowed without prior arrangement with both the vicar and the Director of Music. The camera operator should arrive very early for the service to find out where they may stand. They are expected to remain static throughout the service. They may not patch into the church sound system.

If a service is recorded, there will be an additional fee charged per musician and singer, in line with Musicians' Union guidance.

Marriage Preparation

The minister will want to meet with you a few times before the wedding: initially to fill in the necessary application form, having established your qualifying connection to St Mary's; then over the course of a couple of meetings, to discuss what marriage is about – for the church, for society, and for you. You'll be given a book that you may like to read together as a stimulus for your conversations and for your discussions with them. You will also be encouraged to take part in a marriage preparation course – Holy Trinity Brompton's course is excellent and highly recommended.

The final meeting will be planning the wedding itself, looking at the Order of Service and where your choices of music and readings will be placed, and hopefully answering your questions about what will happen on the day.

The rehearsal will finalise questions of choreography, and give you a chance to walk through the service in church.

For further reading and thinking about marriage, there are lots of resources available.

Books you might like to read:

- Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages*
- John Gottman, *The Relationship Cure: A 5 Step Guide to Strengthening Your Marriage, Family, and Friendships*

YouTube has numerous excellent videos available, including many by these two authors.

It is highly possible that at some point as a couple you will reach an impasse over a particular issue, and want to reach out for an external voice. Marriage counsellors and mutually trusted friends are excellent options; the Vicar is also very happy to offer counsel and support in whatever situation you are facing.

We hope you enjoy planning your wedding day. We also hope you enjoy anticipating being married, and looking forward to the years ahead together. May God bless this new stage in your lives together.

Preparation Timetable

1. Contact the Vicar to book your wedding day. Please do this before you book your reception or send invitations. The date you want may not be available!
2. First meeting – to register your application to be married.
3. Book a marriage preparation course
4. 6 months prior to wedding date: Second meeting, to work on the order of service