

Getting Married at Christ Church Clifton



If you are newly engaged, then many congratulations! We believe that love and marriage are amazing gifts from God and we look forward to helping you have the day of your dreams.

The following words, which are spoken at every wedding, capture something of the church's understanding of the great adventure on which you are embarking, and we encourage you to read them together regularly as you begin to plan your Big Day.

The Bible teaches us that marriage is a gift of God in creation and a means of his grace, a holy mystery in which man and woman become one flesh. It is God's purpose that, as husband and wife give themselves to each other in love throughout their lives, they shall be united in that love as Christ is united with his Church.

Marriage is given, that husband and wife may comfort and help each other, living faithfully together in need and in plenty, in sorrow and in joy. It is given, that with delight and tenderness they may know each other in love, and, through the joy of their bodily union, may strengthen the union of their hearts and lives. It is given as the foundation of family life in which children may be born and nurtured in accordance with God's will, to his praise and glory.

In marriage husband and wife belong to one another, and they begin a new life together in the community. It is a way of life that all should honour; and it must not be undertaken carelessly, lightly, or selfishly, but reverently, responsibly, and after serious thought.

We want you to enjoy all the excitement of planning a truly wonderful day, and so we aim to ensure that the church arrangements are as straightforward as possible.

This booklet has been written to help answer many of your questions about having a Church of England wedding. Once you are ready to discuss this with us please contact our Church Office who will arrange for one of our clergy team to meet with you so that we can talk through things in more detail.

Paul

Paul Langham (Vicar)



Paul and Jackie

Can we be married at Christ Church?

A Church of England wedding is both spiritual occasion and legal event. Anglican clergy are ministers of religion and also state registrars for the purposes of marriage.

To be eligible to hold your wedding service at Christ Church you first need to be able to demonstrate a 'qualifying connection' to this church. If either of you has been previously married, or in a civil partnership, please also consult the 'What if one or both of us is divorced?' section further on in this leaflet.

You are eligible to marry at Christ Church if:

- you live in the parish of Christ Church Clifton – to check whether you are, please visit www.achurchnearyou.com
- you have attended Christ Church regularly for over 6 months and can therefore apply to be on the Electoral Roll – if you do not qualify in any other way, you will need to attend at least once a month on a Sunday regularly for 6 months. However, we invite you to attend at least twice a month, as this will enable us to get to know you better. Each time you visit you will need to let one of our clergy know that you are attending a service with us. After that, we will be able to enter you on the Electoral Roll and discuss a date for your wedding with you
- you were baptised or confirmed in the parish of Christ Church Clifton*
- your parents or grandparents were married at Christ Church Clifton*
- you (or any of your parents during your lifetime) have lived within the parish of Christ Church Clifton for a period of more than 6 months *
- you or your parents have worshipped at Christ Church Clifton at some stage (either more than 3 times a year for many years or at least once a month for 6 months)

* *If one of these qualifying connections applies, you will need to be able to produce documentary evidence to support this, or be willing to complete a statutory declaration or legal affidavit.*

There are certain, rare, circumstances in which it may be possible to apply for a Special License if you believe you have a good reason to be married here which is not covered above. More details can be found on the Church of England's weddings website: www.yourchurchwedding.org/faqs

How do we book a date and plan the service?

1 Contact the Church Office

If you have a clear qualifying connection, then we'd love to meet and talk with you. Please contact the office at office@ccweb.org.uk or 0117 973 6524 and we will arrange for one of our clergy team to meet with you. If you have a particular date in mind for your service, the office may be able to hold the date for you, but cannot make a firm booking until you have met with one of the clergy.

2 Marriage Preparation

As clergy, we take our responsibility very seriously for ensuring you have the best chance for a marriage that endures and thrives. We will arrange for you to receive marriage preparation as part of our journey with you towards your wedding day. We regret that we are unable to accept bookings for the weddings of any couple that declines marriage preparation, either here or in another church.

At Christ Church, marriage preparation includes a one-day course called 'Marriage by Design' which will help you to prepare beyond the wedding – and to think about the married life you want to create together. It is a very practical course designed for couples: there is no group work involved and we find that engaged couples really enjoy coming on it.

You will also be given a couples survey to complete prior to the course. This is not a test but is a great springboard for discussion. You will then be assigned a support couple who will be a trained volunteer married couple from the church. They will invite you to supper at their house to go through the results of your survey and are there to help you to talk through any discussion points arising from your answers. They will also happily discuss any questions you might have about the realities of married life.

Marriage Preparation is available for a small fee per couple. This includes the survey, the one-day course and a copy of 'The Marriage Book' by Nicky and Sila Lee. For more information and to book on the next course please visit www.ccweb.org.uk/whats-on/courses/marriagepreparation



3 Meeting a member of the clergy team to plan your service

It is a wonderful joy and privilege for us to guide a couple towards one of the biggest days of their lives and we very much look forward to meeting you and getting to know you. The member of clergy you meet for this initial conversation will be the one who will take your service. We count it our privilege to do all we can to support you in the exciting process of planning for your Big Day.

There are certain things you are required to have if you are marrying in the Church of England:

- your vows must be taken by an ordained minister of the Church of England, but we welcome others to take part in the service in other ways, such as reading. Indeed, it may be that you know an Anglican minister from elsewhere and would like him or her to take your service: we are more than happy to accommodate this
- you must have at least one reading from the bible

In addition, a Christian wedding service includes:

Hymns or songs of worship

Prayers

Additional readings if you wish (either from the bible or other sources)

A talk by the member of clergy taking your service or another qualified person

Our **Wedding Planner Booklet** can be downloaded from our website and will give you plenty of ideas, so that you can begin to think about the service you would like in preparation for your meeting with one of the clergy. You can also find out more by visiting www.yourchurchwedding.org/your-wedding/you-can-choose

For more local information (for example about flowers or a drinks reception in the church after your service) please contact the church office.

You will each need to bring the following with you when you meet one of the clergy:

- documentary evidence of your qualifying connection
- proof of nationality, such as a passport or driving license (please see the relevant section below if one of you is not an EU citizen)

If the member of clergy who meets with you agrees that you are eligible to marry at Christ Church you will then be able to go ahead and confirm the date with our office.

What are Banns?

Under English law it is necessary to give public notice of your intention to marry. If you choose to marry in a Register Office this would be done by way of a notice displayed outside the office. In the Church of England your intention to marry is made public through the 'calling of Banns', read publicly in a Sunday service in the parish churches in which each of you live, for three consecutive weeks.

Please note that our clergy cannot conduct a wedding until we have seen the certificates showing that Banns have been called in each parish necessary.

Banns need to be called (read out) in the parish church where you are getting married and in any other parish(es) where you live. So, for example, if you both live in our parish of Christ Church Clifton, your Banns will only need to be called here in Christ Church. However, if you are getting married here and one or both of you lives in a different parish to Christ Church, your Banns will also need to be read at your local parish church as well.

To find out which parish, or parishes, you live in please visit www.achurchnearyou.com

If you need your Banns read in another parish, or parishes, please contact your local parish church directly. (Their contact details should be listed on the website link above.) You simply need to inform them that you are being married here at Christ Church Clifton, and explain that you live in their parish. They may ask to meet with you, or simply send you a form to complete. There is a fee to pay to each parish church calling your Banns.

Banns need to be called on three consecutive Sundays at one of our main Sunday services within three months of your wedding date. We will let you know the dates and services at which your Banns will be read here so that you can attend to hear them if you would like. If your Banns are also being read in another parish, they will do the same so you will need to check with them when they plan to read your Banns there.

As clergy, we cannot proceed with your service until we have seen Banns certificates from any other parishes where they have been read. Please do call our Church Office if you have any uncertainty about this.

We are getting married in another church and need our Banns read at Christ Church, how do we go about it?

For information on this please see the sheet with the same title which is downloadable from our website at www.ccweb.org.uk '*We are getting married in another church and need our Banns read at Christ Church, how do we go about it?*'

What if one or both of us in *not* a UK citizen but is a citizen of the European Economic Area?

We are aware that the wording which follows is somewhat complex, but we need to faithfully represent the legal situation as it stands.

If you are not a UK citizen, but you are a European Economic Area (EEA)* national living here in the UK, then you can marry by Banns or Common Licence and you should make an appointment through the Church Office to meet with one of our clergy. You will need to bring with you evidence of your nationality.

EEA countries are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK

What if one or both of us is from *outside* the European Economic Area?

If either of you is from outside the EEA, having a Church of England wedding will involve some different paperwork and there will be a number of things we will need to talk to you about as soon as possible.

Please make an appointment through the Church Office to meet with one of our clergy. The clergy will check your identification and qualifying connection. Following this meeting, any couples planning to marry in Christ Church, where one or both of the couple come from outside the EEA, will need to apply to the Register Office to obtain a Superintendent Registrar's Certificate (SRC).

There are only certain Register Offices that are able to provide you with an SRC. Our nearest ones are Bristol, Swindon and Exeter.

The process to obtain an SRC takes 28 days from the point of application until you are issued with an SRC. If one or both of you has limited or no immigration status, the Home Office may extend the notice period from 28 days to 70 days to allow for further investigation before any certificate can be issued.

Receiving this certificate means that you won't need to go through the process of calling Banns or obtaining a Common License.

Please be aware that you will need to start this process at least three months prior to the date you wish to get married, in order to give enough time. We recommend you actually give at least six months just to ensure the lead-up to your wedding is not rushed. For further information please contact the Bristol Register Office on 0117 922 2800 or register.office@bristol.gov.uk

What if one or both of us is divorced?

We are deeply aware that the breakdown of a marriage is a traumatic event and a source of great pain; and we want to be as sensitive as we can to your circumstances. We know that if you are in this situation you will be even more determined that your new relationship works and has God's blessing. We will do all we can to help you, within the guidelines laid down by our Bishops.

In certain circumstances Church of England guidelines do provide the possibility of remarriage in church for people who have been divorced. To find out more, please visit www.churchofengland.org/media/1162432/leafletforenquirers.pdf Once you have read this 'Leaflet For Enquiries' and if you decide that you would value the opportunity to talk further, we will arrange for one of our clergy team to meet with you. In the Leaflet For Enquirers you will find an application form, please complete this and bring it with you to that first meeting as this will enable us to establish whether it will be possible for you to be married in church.

As part of the Church of England, we seek both to uphold the sanctity of marriage, and yet also to respond with God's own love, grace and forgiveness to those who have suffered the breakdown of a relationship. We're also aware that, for those who have been through a divorce, additional time and help can be needed to ensure that nothing hinders the growth and long-term success of a new relationship.

We strongly recommend that you consider joining a short course with a group like Aquila (www.hope-after-heartbreak.co.uk). This course is run by people who themselves have been through the experience of relationship breakdown, and which help others learn from past experience in order to help build healthy, life-giving and life-long future relationships. As we walk you both through to marriage our aim is to offer as much help and service to you as possible, making available to you resources that will help build a foundation for your marriage to last a lifetime.

What next?

If you believe that you qualify to get married at Christ Church or you have any questions about anything in this booklet please contact our Church Office.

Our **Wedding Planning Booklet** is also available to download from our website and is written to help you plan the details of your Church of England wedding—such as the vows, hymns, and bible readings.

Finally, we wish you all God’s blessings upon your wedding and marriage preparations, and we pray for a lifelong strong and happy marriage together!



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