

The Wigston Benefice

The parish of All Saints and St Wistan, Wigston Magna
and
The Parish of St Thomas the Apostle, South Wigston

Arranging your Wedding: Frequently Asked Questions

PLEASE READ THIS INFORMATION CAREFULLY
and keep it for reference as your plans progress



1. ***Can we get married in one of the churches of the Wigston benefice?***

You can be married in one of our three churches so long as at least one of you lives in the relevant parish (i.e. to be married at All Saints or St Wistan's you should live in Wigston Magna; to be married at St Thomas' you should live in South Wigston)

OR at least one of you

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

OR if 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 if one of your grandparents

- was married in the parish

Unfortunately, if none of the above applies, you will not qualify to be married in any of our churches. In this case, we suggest that you contact the Vicar or Priest-in-Charge of the parish where you live, or where any of the above qualifications do apply.

If you are still uncertain about whether you qualify to be married here, please contact us for further assistance.

2. ***Can we still get married in the parish church if one of us has been divorced and the former spouse is still living?***

Possibly.

The Church of England takes seriously the belief that marriage should be a life-long commitment. However, we do understand that things can go wrong and that sadly divorce is sometimes the only solution. We also preach a Gospel of forgiveness and

recognise that all of us need a second chance in all sorts of situations. Balancing these beliefs is difficult, so we look at each case as sympathetically as possible on an individual basis.

The parish priest (Vicar) will want to meet you and to talk to you about your particular situation and will then decide whether or not he is happy to proceed. The parish priest's decision is final and you do not have any right of appeal, nor can you ask any other priest or minister to marry you in the parish church if the parish priest does not give permission for the marriage service to go ahead.

If the parish priest agrees to your wedding, he will need to see your *Decree Absolut* before making any firm arrangements.

If it isn't possible for us to offer you a marriage service, we may be able to offer a church service of dedication and thanksgiving (sometimes called a "Blessing Service") to follow your marriage in a registry office or some other 'secular' venue. Some couples find this a helpful compromise.

3. Can we get married on any day of the week, including Sunday?



Most people choose to get married on a Saturday, because it usually means more guests are free and able to attend. However, weddings can take place on any day of the week depending upon the availability of the church and the priest. On weekdays, though, it's much harder to find choir members or bell-ringers who are available, so if you want a choir and/or bells for your service, a Saturday would always be a better option.

Sundays are occasionally possible, but are not recommended. You will need to bear in mind that there will be several services taking place during the day, and the priest will be very busy, so careful thought will need to be given to the timing of your service. Once again, because the organist, the choir and the bell-ringers will have been busy on a Sunday, it may be difficult to get them for your wedding.

4. Are there any days of the year when we can't be married in church?

We won't be able to conduct your wedding on Good Friday or the following day, Holy Saturday/Easter Eve (sometimes incorrectly known as "Easter Saturday").

Good Friday is the day when the Church solemnly recalls Jesus' death, and on the Saturday, as Jesus lies in the tomb, the church mourns and prepares prayerfully and quietly for the resurrection on Easter Day. It is an ancient tradition that no celebrations take place in church during this time.

You may hear of some churches that conduct weddings on this day, but we, like most other churches worldwide, believe this to be inappropriate. Whilst we appreciate that this may be a disappointment to you, we hope you understand our reasons. In any event, a wedding on the Saturday *after* Easter will actually be a *proper* Easter wedding, and the church will be brightly decorated and in true celebration mode – so why not go for that instead?

5. Are there any important legal things that need to be done before we can be married?

Yes – and they are very important!



Most couples are married following the calling of “Banns of Marriage” – a public declaration of their intention to marry and an invitation for anyone who knows a legal reason why they may not marry to come forward. For most couples this is, of course, just a formality, but it’s a crucial one.

Banns need to be read in the parish where each of you lives as well as the parish church in which you are to be married, if that is somewhere else. You must have your banns read out in the relevant church(es) for three Sundays during the three months before the wedding. This is usually done over three consecutive Sundays.

Banns are usually read at the main Sunday service. Some couples like to be present to hear their banns read, but this isn’t essential. If you would like to hear your banns read we would be delighted to see you. Our usual main Sunday service times are:



St Wistan, Wigston Magna 8.30am (and 10.15am on 2nd Sunday of the month)

All Saints, Wigston Magna 10.00am

St Thomas, South Wigston 10.00am

If you need to have your banns read in any church(es) other than the one in which you are being married, it is your responsibility to arrange this. You will need to contact the Vicar or Priest-in-Charge there and ask for your Banns to be read, and later on you will need to get a signed certificate from him/her to confirm that your banns have been read and that no legal impediment was alleged.

Please note: THE PRIEST WHO IS CONDUCTING YOUR WEDDING MUST HAVE THE NECESSARY BANNS CERTIFICATE(S) BEFORE THE WEDDING, OTHERWISE HE OR SHE CANNOT LEGALLY MARRY YOU!



If you are unsure what parish you live in, the website www.achurchnearyou.com will help you. If you enter your postcode, the site will show you a list of churches in your area. The one highlighted at the top of the list is the parish in which you live. If you click on this link, you will find contact details for your local Vicar.

If you are having difficulty arranging for your Banns to be read, please contact us immediately and we will do what we can to help.

Where there is not enough notice given for the Banns to be read before the marriage is due to take place, or in the case of the marriage of people whose nationality is not British but who are citizens of countries within the European Union, or if one or both

of you do not live in England, it is recommended that the **Licence Procedure** be used rather than Banns.

There are several different kinds of marriage licence, depending upon your situation, and the parish priest will gladly advise you on the best procedure to follow. If you think you may need to apply for a marriage licence, please contact us as soon as possible.

From March 2015 there are different rules for people from outside the European Union, and it is particularly important that you discuss this with us as soon as possible if this applies to you.

6. When should we book our wedding?

Our churches are very popular for weddings, especially during the summer months, so the sooner you contact us about your preferred date and time, the better. It's usually best to have at least one alternative date in mind, just in case we are already fully booked.

Please note: WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT YOU DON'T MAKE ANY FIRM BOOKING FOR YOUR WEDDING RECEPTION VENUE UNTIL YOU ARE CERTAIN THAT WE HAVE CONFIRMED YOUR SERVICE DATE AND TIME.

7. Will we need to see the priest who is going to marry us?

Yes, but probably not until two or three months before your wedding (unless one of you has been previously married and divorced.) We will get in touch with you to arrange an appointment with one of the clergy – hopefully the priest who will actually be taking your wedding. He or she will discuss with you the service and its meaning and will also talk to you about some of the details e.g. choice of music, hymns, readings etc. Of course, if you have any genuinely urgent questions, you can contact us by phone or e-mail before this.

8. Will we need a rehearsal?

Yes.

Again we will get in touch with you within a month or so of your wedding to arrange a time for a rehearsal in church. This will normally be two or three days before the wedding. The priest who will be marrying you will talk you through the service, do an informal "walk through" and answer any questions that you may have. This is so that you feel more comfortable and relaxed on the day itself.

Ideally, the people we need for the rehearsal are:

Bride and Groom

Best Man

Bride's father or whoever else is accompanying her to church or 'giving her away'

Attendants (i.e. Bridesmaids, Page Boys etc).

Ushers

Your parents or other family members may wish to join you for the rehearsal. This is fine, but is not essential. The rehearsal lasts for approximately 40 minutes.

9. Can we video the wedding service?



Yes, but the priest will want to talk beforehand to the person making the video, to ensure that (s)he is not intrusive during the service. (It might be an idea for them to come to the rehearsal.) Because there are complicated copyright laws and your video may include recording musical performances by an organist and choir, we will need to see evidence that your videographer has the necessary licence and/or copyright permissions in place. In compliance with the recommendations of the Musicians' Union, the fees for an organist performing at the service are automatically doubled when the service is subject to video-recording.

We reserve the right to refuse permission for video recordings to be taken if we believe there may be an infringement of copyright laws. If you are planning to use any pre-recorded music during your wedding or if your service includes certain modern hymns, you will need a Limited Manufacture Licence obtainable from the "PRS for Music" website. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any queries about this.

10. Can wedding guests take photographs during the service?

We ask wedding guests *not* to take photographs during the ceremony itself, although of course your official photographer is welcome to do so. This minimises the number of clicks and flashes that would otherwise be very distracting for you and the priest when you are trying to concentrate on your vows. The priest conducting the service will need to speak to your photographer before the service to discuss where he is going to stand etc.



11. What music and hymns can we have?



Most couples choose to have either two or three hymns at their wedding, but there are no hard and fast rules about this. Some like to enter and leave the church to traditional wedding music such as Wagner's Bridal March and Mendelssohn's Wedding March whilst others prefer to choose something else.

If you do have any special musical requests, it's important to let us know as far in advance as possible. If you require the organist to play a piece of music that is not currently in his or her repertoire, you may be asked to purchase the relevant sheet music.

If you book a choir for your wedding, they will lead the singing of the hymns and will usually also sing during the signing of the registers.

We strongly discourage the use of pre-recorded music at weddings – and there will be particular issues about this if you are making a video of your wedding (see section 8 above) - but if you really would like to have recorded music, perhaps for your entry and exit from church this *may* be possible, and the sooner you let us know about it, the better. The priest retains the right to “veto” any music which he feels is inappropriate. If you plan to have any pre-recorded music, you will need to ensure that one of our Vergers is on duty to operate the sound system.

If you wish to have hymns at your wedding, you will need to book the organist and we will arrange this for you. *We do not permit the use of pre-recorded hymn accompaniments.* This is for contractual reasons and also because it is much better to have a “live” accompanist who can adjust to the congregational singing.

If you would like help choosing your wedding music, please let us know.

12. Will our guests be allowed to throw confetti?

We appreciate that the throwing of confetti is part of the fun of a wedding. However, it can cause problems afterwards, especially where we have more than one wedding in a day, so we ask that the throwing of confetti is delayed until the Bride and Groom are at the far end of the church path or getting into the Bridal car.

Please note: THE THROWING OF CONFETTI AND/OR THE SPRINKLING OF ROSE PETALS OR ANY OTHER FLOWERS IN CHURCH IS NOT PERMITTED.

13. Can we provide our own flowers for the service?

Yes, but you will need to check with us whether there are other weddings in the same church on the same day, as this may affect what is possible. Sometimes couples marrying on the same day liaise with each other about flowers. If your florist requires access to the church on the day of the wedding or the day before, (s)he will need to get in touch with us in advance to arrange a convenient time.

You may choose to either remove your flowers after the service, or leave them in church for the following Sunday (except during the seasons of Lent – the 6 week period before Easter, or Advent - the 4 week period before Christmas.) It is helpful for us to know your intentions beforehand.

14. Is it true that a bride should be late for her wedding?

Absolutely not! Being late for a wedding is discourteous to the bridegroom and the wedding guests and to the priest, the organist and (if applicable) the choir and bellringers - all of whom are giving



up their time. Our churches and their staff are always busy, and it is possible that your wedding may be followed closely by another service.

Please note: IF THE BRIDE IS SIGNIFICANTLY LATE, IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO SHORTEN THE WEDDING SERVICE BY OMITTING THE HYMNS, READINGS AND ADDRESS.

WHERE A BRIDE IS EXCEPTIONALLY LATE, THE ORGANIST, CHOIR AND BELLRINGERS ARE UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO WAIT. WE ALSO RESERVE THE RIGHT TO DEFER YOUR WEDDING UNTIL LATER IN THE DAY IF THE BRIDE'S LATE ARRIVAL COULD IMPACT UPON OTHER SERVICES.

To avoid undue stress, we urge all brides to plan to arrive *early* rather than late. This means that the bride will have plenty of time to have photographs taken outside the church, to “catch her breath” and to ask the priest any last minute questions. In our experience, this means that the Bride enters the church feeling more relaxed, and she enjoys the service much more.

We strongly advise that you leave lots of time for your preparations at home, and ensure that people like hairdressers and beauticians are booked for as early in the day as possible. This is especially important if your wedding is taking place in the morning or at lunchtime. If you are unavoidably delayed (and we do appreciate that even the best laid plans can go wrong), please get a message to someone at the church so that the priest is aware of what is happening, how long you are likely to be etc.

15. Are there any restrictions on how many attendants (bridesmaids etc) we can have?



Technically, you can have as many attendants as you wish, but given the size of our churches and the need for reserved seating for attendants, we usually suggest a maximum of six. If you are planning to have more, please discuss this with us at the earliest opportunity.

If you have any very young bridesmaids or pageboys, please ensure that there is someone in the bridal party who will look after them, especially during the procession into church.

In all of our churches we observe the ancient custom of bridesmaids etc *following* the bride. The role of “attendants” is to follow the bride and “attend” to her dress etc as necessary, just as royal attendants always follow the Queen to honour her prime position. This is the traditional way in which things are done in the Church of England, and it also makes it much easier to get everyone into the correct places at the front of the church where space is sometimes limited.

Will we need ushers?

Yes. We recommend that you have at least two ushers. Their job is to greet the wedding guests, to hand out Orders of Service/hymnbooks and to show people where to sit. If you have booked the services of a Verger (which we strongly recommend) he or she will be present to support them. Ushers will need to be in church half an hour or so before the wedding.

16. Can we do anything out of the ordinary at our wedding?

In order for you to be legally married, your wedding service must conform to the official rites and ceremonies of the Church of England. The priest (who acts as a Registrar) is forbidden by law to make any variations to the basic wording and structure of the service. It is also important to conduct all services with an appropriate degree of reverence and dignity. Sometimes it may be possible to do something extra, but this must be agreed well in advance with the priest, whose decision on the matter will be final. If you have any special requests, please let us know as soon as possible.

Please note: WHEN YOU ARRANGE A WEDDING IN ONE OF OUR CHURCHES, YOU ARE NOT 'HIRING' THE CHURCH BUT ARE AGREEING TO BE MARRIED ACCORDING TO THE RULES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND THE CUSTOMS OF THE PARISH CHURCH. THE PRIEST WHO CONDUCTS YOUR WEDDING IS IN CHARGE OF EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IN THE SERVICE AT ALL TIMES.

17. How can we pay for our wedding?

We usually require a £100 returnable deposit to be paid when you first book your wedding. The balance will need to be paid well before the service. We can accept payment in cash, although this is discouraged, and we have no facilities for Debit or Credit Card payments. Ideally we would prefer you to pay by cheque.



Payment by cheque must be made at least three weeks prior to the wedding. We will let you know the payee details for your cheque, as this varies from church to church.

If you would like to pay in instalments, this can be arranged, but all payments (including cheque clearance) must have been received in full by the date of your rehearsal.

If you decide to cancel, your wedding, please let us know as soon as possible. If you paid a deposit, it will be returned to you.

18. Is there anything that could prevent our wedding from going ahead?



Obviously, we hope nothing will go wrong and we will work closely with you to ensure things go as smoothly as possible. However, you should be aware that your wedding will not be able to go ahead if any of the following apply:

- The appropriate Banns Certificate or Licence has not been received.
- A legal impediment to the marriage requiring investigation is alleged at the Reading of Banns or at the marriage service itself.
- The Bride and/or Groom appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the marriage.
- The Bride's arrival is sufficiently late to disrupt other planned services, including other weddings.
- Full payment (including cheque clearance) has not been received.

And finally.....

19. Where can we find more information?

Visit www.yourchurchwedding.org to find out more about church weddings. The site also includes lists of suggested hymns and music etc.