

Getting married at St Mary Islington

This guide highlights some of the important issues to consider when thinking about whether it is right to get married at St Mary's. However, it is not possible here to give full legal information relating to marriages and in the case of doubt you must take appropriate advice.

There are three kinds of service in relation to marriage:

- A Church of England Marriage Service is a legally-recognised ceremony as well as an occasion for worship and celebration. The form of service is governed by law. After declaring their ability and desire to marry, the couple exchange solemn vows and give and receive ring(s). The minister declares them to be married and the service concludes with prayers and blessings. There are important legal preliminaries to a ceremony of marriage, which must be observed carefully.
- A service of Prayer and Dedication after a Civil Marriage is sometimes known as a Blessing. This service can follow immediately after a civil marriage (e.g. in a Register Office) for couples in circumstances where it would not be possible to have a church wedding. Alternatively, couples who have been married for some time may wish to dedicate their life together to God. The couple begin the service as married people, and there is no giving of rings, though a prayer over the rings is offered. In the dedication the couple resolve to be faithful to each other and pray that in offering themselves to God that they may grow in unity, love and peace. The minister prays for God to bless the marriage which has already taken place.
- The service of Thanksgiving for Marriage may be used to celebrate an anniversary, or in the renewed commitment following a time of difficulty in a marriage. The form of service is flexible and often includes the renewal of wedding vows, in which the couple recall and reaffirm the commitment they made on their wedding day.

What is the situation for marriage after a divorce?

The Church of England teaches that marriage is for life. It also recognises that, sadly, some marriages do fail and, if this should happen, it seeks to be available for all involved. The Church accepts that, in some circumstances, a divorced person may marry again in church during the lifetime of a former spouse.

Our parish clergy are willing to conduct such a marriage in church, subject to the regulations which govern them. The minister will want to talk to you frankly about the past, your hopes for the future and your understanding of marriage. If it is not possible for your proposed marriage to take place in church, the minister may consider other alternatives with you.

Am I entitled to be married in Church?

The Church of England is available for everyone who lives in England, through the parish system. No matter who you are, or where you live, your parish church is your first point of contact for weddings or other services.

You are entitled to be married at St Mary's if one or both of you live in the Parish, or where you can demonstrate a "significant qualifying connection" with St Mary's Church. Significant qualifying connections can include:

- you were baptised at St Mary's Church; have your confirmation entered in a church register book of St Mary's Church; have had your usual place of residence in the Parish for at least six months; or

have habitually attended public worship at St Mary's for at least six months at some point in your life;

- or, your parent has had his or her usual place of residence in the parish for at least six months during your lifetime; or habitually attended public worship at St Mary's for at least six months during your lifetime;
- or, your parent or grandparent was married in the parish.

The precise rules are quite complicated, so please check with us to be sure.

You don't have to be baptised to be married in Church following banns, but some understanding of the Christian faith is important if the service is to be meaningful for you.

Can I have a Christian wedding at another venue?

You may only have a Church of England wedding in a parish church or some other place of worship - normally one licensed by the Bishop. It is not possible to have a religious wedding in other venues, for instance in a hotel.

What are the legal requirements?

Banns of marriage are the normal legal preliminary for a marriage service where both parties are British Citizens. You must have your banns read out in church on three Sundays during the three months before the wedding. Banns are an announcement of your intention to marry and a chance for anyone to put forward a reason why the marriage may not lawfully take place.

Banns need to be read in the parish where each of you lives as well as at the church in which you are to be married. It is your responsibility to ensure that the correct information for calling the banns is given to the minister of the appropriate parish churches at the right time. Banns are not required for Prayer and Dedication after a Civil Marriage or Thanksgiving for Marriage.

If either of you is not a British citizen, you will need to obtain a Superintendent Registrar's Certificate.

If you are under the age of eighteen, you must have your parents' consent to marry.

How much will our wedding cost?

In 2024 the fees are:

- Marriage service £531
- Publication of banns £54
- Verger £80
- Bellringers (optional) £200
- Organist (optional) £150

Who will be the minister at our wedding?

Normally, one of the parish clergy will officiate.

How do I book the church?

As soon as you have decided you would like to get married in church, get in touch with the Vicar, Rev. James on james@stmaryislinton.org or 020 7226 3400. We will help you with the first stages of making the booking and let you know which minister in the parish will be taking your wedding.

The minister taking your service will wish to meet with you in person to discuss your plans.

A £100, non-returnable deposit will secure your booking.

In accepting a booking at a particular time, we have to consider our other commitments. We regret that it is not possible to conduct weddings on Sundays.

Are resources available online?

If you have access to the internet, you'll find a wealth of online resources about weddings. You might like to try yourchurchwedding.org A resource from the Church of England, especially for people planning a church wedding.