



# holy matrimony



GETTING MARRIED at  
the ABBEY church of  
st mary the VIRGIN

**t**hank you for considering the Abbey Church of St Mary the Virgin for your wedding and please accept our sincere congratulations on your engagement!

Christian Marriage, or Holy Matrimony, is defined by the Church in Canon Law as: "a union permanent and lifelong, for better for worse, till death them do part, of one man with one woman, to the exclusion of all others on either side, for the procreation and nurture of children, for the hallowing and right direction of the natural instincts and affections, and for the mutual society, help and comfort which the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity."

If you are ready to enter into this way of life then we are extremely pleased and excited for you, and for your families and friends. It's a wonderful thing and to be able to be with you and to pray God's blessing on your union is a tremendous privilege. No doubt you're already starting to think about and plan for your Wedding Day, but, if you decide to explore the possibility of getting married here at St Mary the Virgin, then what you find here will be essential reading.

This booklet is intended to ensure that you have all the important information you'll require to begin to plan for the Big Day. Some of what is included here might, at times, seem a bit dry but *please read it all very carefully*. Your Wedding, wherever it is, will, without doubt, be a wonderful and an exciting occasion, but the fact remains that there are lots of extremely important things for you to consider and take in before you apply to be married here.

Our goal is to ensure that you get the very best for your Wedding Day and the best start to your married life together.

With prayers for you as you start to prepare in earnest and, more importantly, for a new and exciting way of life together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr Tom". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Father Tom

## who can get married at st mary the virgin?

Although the Church of England has recently passed legislation to make it a lot easier to get married in the parish church of your choice, it's still not quite as straightforward as simply picking your favourite venue. Legal restrictions are imposed upon us and that means that you will need to have a '**qualifying connection**' to this Parish Church in order to get married here; you will also need to be able to show documentary evidence that proves a 'qualifying connection'.

You can legally get married at St Mary the Virgin *if you can show* that **any one** of the following criteria applies to you:

- if either bride or groom live in the Parish of St Mary the Virgin.
- if either bride or groom has, at any time, lived in the Parish of St Mary the Virgin for a continuous period of at least six months.
- if either bride or groom was baptised at St Mary the Virgin.
- if either bride or groom have been confirmed and your Confirmation is recorded in the Confirmation Register at St Mary the Virgin.
- if either bride or groom has regularly attended St Mary the Virgin for worship for a period of at least six months.

*or*

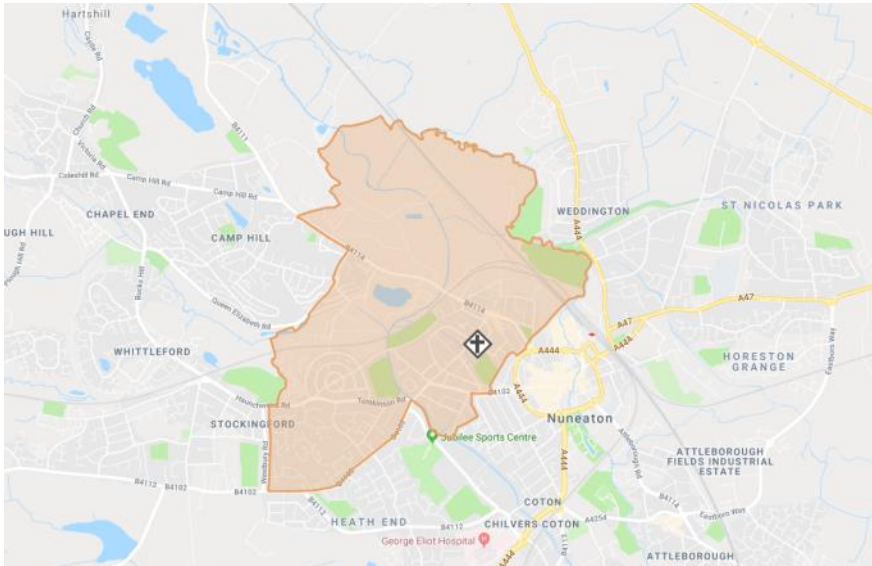
- if one the parents of either bride or groom, **at any time after you were born**, has lived in the Parish of St Mary the Virgin for a continuous period of at least six months.
- if one of your parents has regularly attended St Mary the Virgin for worship for a period of at least six months.

*or*

- if the parents or grandparents of either bride or groom were married at the Abbey Church of St Mary the Virgin.

If you are unable to prove that any of the above criteria apply to you and you still wish to be married at the Abbey then **all is not lost**: it is possible to establish a 'qualifying connection' and become legally eligible if one of you regularly attends the 10.15am Sunday Parish Mass for a period of at least six months (in this case, 'regularly' should be understood to mean at least twice a month).

To discover whether or not you live in the Parish of St Mary the Virgin, please go to <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/12985/> and zoom in using the map tool to see if your home lies within the parish – the orange shaded area shows the boundaries of our parish. Unfortunately, ‘close’ is not close enough— we can’t bend the rules, even if you’re only a few feet over the parish boundary.



If either bride or groom is a non-EEA national (ie, non-European) then a Superintendent Registrar’s Certificate will need to be acquired before a wedding can take place in any Church of England parish church.

In accordance with the Immigration Act 2014, **all of those who wish to be married in a Church of England parish church must provide evidence of their nationality** (a current passport or birth certificate).

Contrary to popular belief, neither bride nor groom need be baptised in order to be married in a Church of England parish church; so, if one or both of you weren’t baptised as a child that’s not a problem—but adults can be baptised, too, so if you would like to explore baptism, the Vicar would be delighted to speak with you about this. However, Baptism is a special gift of God and a Sacrament of His Church and can only be offered as part of a serious Christian commitment, so we can’t baptise simply in order to establish a ‘qualifying connection’.

## what if one of us is divorced?

If either bride or groom is divorced and has a former spouse who is still alive, then, at present, we are unable to offer Holy Matrimony at St Mary the Virgin; but there are still ways that we can help you to celebrate your wedding and to celebrate it with you.

We, of course, absolutely understand that life and relationships are complicated and that this is a delicate matter, but the fact that we can't offer marriage to you really is not a judgement on you or your life; rather it is a matter of theology and ecclesiology: the Vicar does not recognise that he has the authority – and, therefore, is unable, in good conscience – to dispense with the historic and traditional teaching of the Universal Church. That said, just because we are not in a position to offer the marriage ceremony to those who are divorced it doesn't mean that we don't recognise that your forthcoming union can't or won't be a beautiful thing and a blessing on your lives, on the lives of your families and friends, on your community, and on the world around you.

After a civil ceremony at the Register Office or another wedding venue, we are able – and would be delighted – to welcome you into church for a service of Prayer and Dedication. This looks just a little different to a wedding service, in that bride and groom enter together and rings are not exchanged; but other than that is very similar and a lovely ceremony. For a service of Prayer and Dedication after a civil ceremony there is no need to satisfy the legal requirements or qualifying criteria that are essential for a wedding in church – all you need to do is get in touch and arrange a time to meet with the Vicar.

## same-sex unions

The Church of England holds to a traditional understanding of the sacrament of Holy Matrimony, consistent with the Universal Church; further to and as a consequence of this it is not legally permitted to offer marriage to same-sex couples nor services of Prayer and Dedication after a same-sex civil ceremony in the Church of England.

All are welcome at St Mary the Virgin, regardless of race, nationality, gender, or sexuality and we strive to ensure that everybody can feel at

home here. We hope, sincerely, that the Church's position on marriage won't alter that fact for you.

## When can we get married?

The date and time of your wedding will need to be arranged with the Vicar so, although you might have an idea of when you would like it to be, please be aware that some degree of flexibility is necessary as he will have other commitments and there may already be other weddings or events booked in at St Mary the Virgin.

It is illegal for Church of England marriages to begin earlier than 9am and they must be concluded by 6pm by law (so, that means that wedding services need to begin by 5pm).

Although Saturday is the most popular and often the most convenient day of the week for weddings it is, technically, possible to get married on any day. That said, it is, of course, not possible to be married at St Mary the Virgin on a Sunday morning because of our regular Parish Mass. It is also not possible for us to offer to celebrate your wedding with you during Holy Week (the week before and including Easter Sunday) nor on Christmas Day.

It is worth bearing in mind that the six weeks before Easter (the season of Lent) and the four weeks before Christmas (the season of Advent) are traditional periods of penitence and abstinence in the Church and, as such, decorations are muted, if not completely absent. During Advent floral decorations are very limited and during Lent absolutely no flowers or floral displays are allowed in church, including at weddings. Naturally, this might be a very important consideration for you when choosing a date for your wedding. It is not always completely obvious how to work out when Lent will be in the years ahead (it changes year on year with the date of Easter), so, if you're not sure, please ask the Vicar. If you suggest a potential date during Lent we will, of course, let you know and remind you of the ramifications.

Please be aware that we can't hold dates and times for you without a full application and deposit.



## so, what happens next?

As long as you are legally entitled to be married here at St Mary the Virgin, the next thing to do is to get in touch with the Vicar (contact details are printed at the back of this booklet) and you will be able to arrange a meeting with him to work out a date and time for your wedding. When you get together he will provide you with a banns application form to fill in so that your banns can be published (read) in church; if you live outside the parish of St Mary the Virgin then you will also have to have your banns read at your own parish church (you should be able to work out your 'home' parish by visiting [www.achurchnearyou.com](http://www.achurchnearyou.com) and entering your postcode into the search box – if you have any trouble doing this, the Vicar will be pleased to help you).

It is best if you can get your banns application form to us (and to any other parish church that you will need them published in) within six months of your actual wedding and no later than three months before your wedding. Your banns will then be published on three consecutive Sundays at the 10.15am Parish Mass; these three Sundays will be within three months of your wedding day. We will, of course, let you know the dates on which your banns are scheduled to be published and we will invite you to join us on those Sundays to hear your banns being read. There are statutory legal fees for the publication of banns which will be included in the total cost of the wedding.

When you fill in your banns application form it is essential that you both do so using your full, legal names and that both bride and groom sign the form.

If any of your details change (such as your address or your legal name) prior to the publication of your banns you must let us know as soon as possible.

If your banns need to be published in a parish other than St Mary the Virgin then, once they have been read there on three consecutive Sundays, you will be given a Certificate which, along with proof of nationality and documentary evidence of your qualifying connection, we absolutely must see before we can proceed with your wedding.

In exceptional circumstances there may not enough time for your banns to be read in church, in which case you will need to apply for a Common Licence, rather than banns; this is also the process you will need to undertake if one or both of you are British, but do not live in England or Wales – again, the Vicar will be able to help you with this.

If one or both of you is a national of a country which is outside the European Economic Area, you will require a Superintendent Registrar's Certificate to marry, rather than have banns read.

## What are Banns?

Banns are an ancient and traditional way in which your forthcoming wedding is publicly announced and is also a way for anyone to offer a legal challenge to it (this sounds scary, but if there's no legal reason why you shouldn't be getting married then there is really nothing to worry about!).

The form of words for the publication of banns is:

*I publish the banns of marriage between N of [e.g. the parish of ] and N of [e.g. this parish]. If any of you know cause or just impediment why these two persons should not be joined together in Holy Matrimony, ye are to declare it. This is the [first/ second/ third] time of asking.*

ry 4Love is patient, love is kind. It does  
to not envy, it does not boast, it is not  
e proud. 5It is not rude, it is not self-seek-  
ing, it is not easily angered, it keeps no  
record of wrongs. 6Love does not de-  
light in evil but rejoices with the truth.  
7It always protects, always trusts, al-  
ways hopes, always perseveres.  
8Love never fails. But where  
prophecies, they



## Readings

The Church of England wedding service always contains at least one reading from the Bible, a list of suitable wedding readings are listed below. The Vicar is happy to read the Bible reading you choose, but reading the lesson is a wonderful way for someone you love to participate in your ceremony. A friend or family member would be a nice option, for example, but it is also possible for either groom or bride to read the Bible reading.

Some suggested readings:

*1 Corinthians 13*

*Genesis 1.26-28*

*Song of Solomon 2.10-13; 8.6-7*

*Matthew 5.1-10*

*Mark 10.6-9, 13-16*

*John 2.1-11*

*Ephesians 5.21-33*

*Philippians 4.4-9*

*Colossians 3.12-17*

*1 John 4.7-12*

## hymns

Holy Matrimony is an act of worship and singing God's praises is always an important feature of a service in church, so we ask that you choose (at least) two hymns for your wedding ceremony. There are lots and lots of possibilities and there is a list of suitable hymns below; but, if you're struggling, a good idea is to visit the Church of England's website, [www.yourchurchwedding.org](http://www.yourchurchwedding.org) and when choosing your hymns look them up on Youtube!

If the hymns you choose are not in our hymn books then it will be necessary for you to print separate sheets or to include the text of the hymns in an order of service (if you choose to produce one).

Some suggested hymns:

*All Things Bright and Beautiful*

*Amazing Grace*

*Bind us Together*

*Dear Lord and Father of Mankind  
Give me Joy in my Heart  
Guide Me, O thou Great Redeemer  
Immortal, Invisible  
I Vow to Thee my Country  
I Watch the Sunrise  
Jerusalem  
Lead Us Heavenly Father Lead Us  
Lord of all Hopefulness  
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling  
Morning has Broken  
O Jesus I Have Promised  
Make Me a Channel of Your peace  
One More Step Along The World I Go  
Praise my soul the King of Heaven  
The King of Love my Shepherd is  
We Pledge to One Another*

## **other music**

Traditional music for the Bride's entrance and the couples' departure from the church might include the following (all worth YouTubing):

Wagner – The Bridal Chorus  
Pachelbel – Canon in D  
Mendelssohn – Wedding March  
Handel – Arrival of the Queen of Sheba

But you might like something more contemporary – we are quite happy to use CDs of other music but you will need to provide them yourself and bring them to the rehearsal. Please also check with the Vicar first, before settling on a piece of music.

It is also customary for music to be played during the signing of the Marriage Registers – again, the organist can play music during this part of the service for a more traditional feel, or you could use tracks from CDs.

## ORDER OF SERVICE

Some couples decide to produce an order of service for their wedding day, although it is absolutely not essential for you to do so – we can and, probably more often than not, do get through marriage services without a specially-made order of service.

Nevertheless, it is true that they are nice mementoes of your big day, so it is something you might like to consider. If you think you would like to have one, a simple and effective design is to have a personalised cover and then, on the inside, the headings for each section of the wedding, as well as the text of your hymns and the Lord's Prayer.

We don't produce them here at the Church, so you would need to be in touch with a printing firm or make them yourselves at home.

However, if you decide that you would like one, please ask the Vicar to email you an example and if you email him a copy before it goes to press he will be happy to look over it to make sure that it is all as it should be – another pair of eyes is never a bad thing!

## FEES

For 2018 the fees for a wedding at the Abbey Church of St Mary the Virgin are £655. but please be aware that this is amended nationally each year, so this is subject to small changes – we will advise you of the exact cost when you make your booking.

£484 of these fees are statutory fees that we are legally obliged to charge and a large percentage of that is passed on to the Diocese of Coventry – these monies, then, go towards the upkeep of the church locally, regionally, and nationally and without the fees we collect from wedding this beautiful building might not have been available for your own! The rest of the fees cover flowers, organist, vergers, and the running costs of the church building.

Marrying at the Register Office, unsurprisingly, incurs least financial outlay than marrying in church, but our prices are very reasonable compared to the cost of getting married in another venue locally or nationally.

Please be sure to read this booklet thoroughly.  
Once you have done so, if you would like any  
further information or if you would like to begin the  
process of formally booking your Wedding at  
**The Abbey Church of St Mary the Virgin**  
please contact the Vicar:

**Fr Thomas Wintle SSC**  
**The Abbey Vicarage**  
**99 Bottrill Street**  
**Nuneaton**  
**CV11 5JB**

**02476 382936**  
**t.g.b.wintle@gmail.com**



**THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND**



**The Society**  
under the patronage of Saint Wilfrid and Saint Hilda