

Your Church Wedding

**The Parish of All Saints' Birchington with St
Thomas Minnis Bay**

Helping you prepare for your wedding day and all
that will follow

Welcome!

We are delighted that you will be celebrating the start of your life together in one of our churches. The information in this booklet will help you as you prepare for the wedding.

More important than this booklet will be your meetings with the minister who will conduct your service. He or she will meet with you during the period leading up to the wedding to plan the service with you and to discuss the Christian understanding of your marriage. Once you have booked the date for your wedding, which you may do over the phone, you will need to arrange a date for a first meeting with him or her. How soon this takes place will depend on the date of your wedding.

As you prepare for your wedding you might find it useful to visit www.yourchurchwedding.org which has lots of ideas and resources to help you plan the service. In addition, you should always feel free to ask any questions of the minister as you prepare for the wedding together.

1. Christian Marriage

Christians believe that one of the most important things we can know about God is that he is love – *‘God is love, and those who live in love live in God and God lives in*

them' says the Bible. The love that you share is God's gift to you, and shows you something of what he is like.

Christians also believe that marriage is a gift from God, and that God blesses those that commit themselves to each other when they get married. By choosing to get married in a church you are following in the footsteps of millions of people who have made their wedding promises to each other in front of God, and who have known the blessings that result.

2. The Service

The minister taking your wedding will go through the structure and content of the wedding service with you. Much of the service is fixed, and cannot be changed, but there are plenty of ways in which you can make it unique and personal as well. These include choices about readings, hymns, music and the involvement of friends and family as well as the flowers, the service sheet and whether or not to have bells.

The service itself has five main sections:

The Declarations When the priest asks, the bride and groom, and all those present, for the final time, whether there is any reason why they should not get married.

The Vows & Giving of Rings This is the heart of the service when you exchange the famous wedding vows

with each other, promising *‘to have and to hold, from this day forward’*. The words of the vows are on the Church of England website so that you can start to get to know them. You will also give and receive rings, as a symbol of the unending love of God that has brought you together and the bond which you are making with each other, a bond which will last the rest of your lives.

The Readings & Sermon All church weddings include one or more readings from the Bible, and your minister can help you with suggestions in choosing something that speaks to you. In addition, some couples like to choose a reading or poem not from the Bible which has meaning to them. Asking a friend or family member to read can be a good way to personalise your service. You can discuss this with the minister. During the service the minister will briefly speak (and only briefly!) about God and marriage.

The Prayers The wedding service always includes prayers for you and those that love you. This is another good place for friends and family members to be involved with the service. The prayers usually finish with the Lord’s Prayer in either its modern or traditional form.

The Marriage Document In order to make the marriage legal, the marriage document needs to be signed during the service. This usually takes place

towards the end of the service. The Bride and Groom both need to sign the marriage document together with a minimum of two witnesses. The minister also signs. At the end of the service the minister will provide an acknowledgement. You will have twenty-one days after your wedding service takes place to collect your marriage certificate from the Registry Office. A marriage certificate costs £11 but you may wish to check with Kent Registry Office (68 Ellington Road, Ramsgate) on 03000 411919.

3. Music

Within this structure, you can choose to have hymns – usually one or two, although sometimes three. There is a list of well-known and loved hymns on www.yourchurchwedding.org/hymns-media-player.aspx, where you can also listen to the tunes. We also offer the option of a choir, who can lead the hymns and other music. Your minister will be happy to discuss this and all aspects of the music with you when you meet, or you may wish to speak with Tim Attride, Director of Music.

If you choose to have an organist, you might like to choose music for your entry and exit. Well known favourites include:

For the arrival of the bride:

The arrival of the Queen of Sheba (by Handel)

The Bridal March from Lohengrin (by Wagner)

As you leave church:

The Wedding March (by Mendelssohn)

Finale from the Water Music (by Handel)

You can listen to many of these online, and you can discuss the possibilities with your minister or the Director of Music.

4. Some Practicalities

Banns of Marriage Before getting married in a church you need to have Banns read out. This is a legal requirement, and they are announced in church on three consecutive Sundays, usually two months before your wedding, together with the words *'If anyone knows any reason in law why these people should not be married, you are to declare it now'*. Having your banns read is much more than a matter of the law, and gives you a good opportunity to come to church before the wedding, where you will be prayed for by the Minister. For many couples, hearing their banns read out is an important moment in the build up to the day.

If you do not live in the area you will be required to have your Banns read in your local Parish Church (“Away Banns”) and there is a fee for this and the issuing of a Banns certificate. There is a small fee payable to that church for this service. Your minister can help you find out which church(es) you need to contact, and how to do this.

In some situations, you will need to obtain a *special license*, instead of banns. Your minister will discuss this with you, and tell you what needs to happen.

Meeting the Clergy The Minister who will take your wedding will carefully support and guide you in all the planning and preparations for the service. You should expect to meet up to three times before the service, so that all aspects of this important day can be discussed. Meetings are held in the Parish Office in Church House, Kent Gardens, CT7 9RS.

Some time in the week before the wedding, your minister will arrange for the rehearsal to happen. This is always in the church and gives the opportunity for everyone involved to go through everything that will happen during the service.

It is good if as many of those who will have a role come to the rehearsal as possible, including best man, the

father of the bride, page-boys, bridesmaids and anyone who will read or take part in the service.

Preparing for life together Obviously, your wedding is about more than just one day. It marks the start of your life together as husband and wife. The period leading up to your wedding is a perfect time to prepare, not just for the big day, but for the years together that will follow. We have a range of resources to help you think together about the big promises that you will be making, these include DVDs, books and the opportunity to talk, in confidence, about your lives together.

Flowers and Decoration

There are flower arrangers who can help you plan your flowers. Please contact:

Maureen Hudson: 07802 804134

Service Sheets You may choose to have some sort of order of service for your guests. There are many ways to organise this, from professional printing to doing it yourselves. However you decide to arrange it, you will need to talk it through with your minister, as you plan the service together. Your minister will proofread it if you wish.

Photos Your wedding service is an act of worship, and is deeply holy. If guests take photos, we ask that this is done sensitively without disturbing the flow of the service. If you have an official photographer, it is helpful if they can speak to the minister before the service, to find out what they are allowed to do during the service.

Videos Due to copyright law, any videoing needs to be covered by a formal agreement with the church. If you would like to have your wedding recorded on video, please discuss this with the minister, who will be happy to explain. There is a charge for this.

Confetti This can be thrown outside away from the porch or entrance of the church. We request that you use biodegradable confetti or rose/flower petals.

5. Costs

There is a standard fee for a church wedding, which in 2025 is £544. There is a further standard charge for £37 for reading banns, and £19 for the certificate of banns if “Away Banns” are required. We also make a charge of £25 for the presence of a ‘verger’ – who is present to enable the minister to concentrate on the service. They set up the church beforehand and during the service and they will be present to help with anything practical.

Further charges – all of which are detailed on the attached form – are payable for other elements of the service, including an organist (£60), a choir (£120), heating (if the service is between October and March), bell ringing (£100) and flowers (single pedestal £60; full package £135).

We ask for a minimum deposit of £50 to be paid when the wedding is booked. The balance will be due at the start of the reading of the Banns, usually two months before the service, but please discuss with the minister if there are any issues regarding payment. The Fee Form also includes details of how to pay.

We look very much forward to preparing for your special day with you.

