

Getting married at St Agatha's Church

We are pleased that you want to involve us and the Church in your wedding. At St. Agatha's we realise that your wedding is a very special occasion and we will do all in our power to make sure that all goes smoothly and that it is a happy day for you both. You will have many things on your mind; we hope this booklet will help you.

PREPARATION

The two of you are the most important part of the wedding. You are probably very busy making lots of practical preparations, but you need to prepare yourselves. The priest will stand closer to you at your wedding than anyone else; he takes you through the vows you make; and so I have a responsibility to help prepare you for your marriage. Each priest has his own way of carrying out this duty (which is also a privilege). I will see you several times, and talk to you about what it means to be married.

Our usual pattern at the moment is for me to see you a couple of times in a group with others getting married, and then once or twice privately, as well as the rehearsal.

Our wish is not to tell you what to do, but to give you a good start. It may seem as though we spend a lot of time on the possible problems, e.g. money, children, time together, arguments, etc - but this is because we know that if you can deal with these (with help from God, your family and friends, and each other) you will be as excited about being married in 30 or 50 years time as you are now.

WHAT THE CHURCH BELIEVES ABOUT MARRIAGE

Marriage is more than two people agreeing to live together. The Marriage Service talks about two ways in which it is more.

Firstly, marriage is to do with God and His gifts. He has given marriage to us for friendship and companionship, for love making (including - but not just - sex) and for the growing up of children within loving families. In our family life and married life, as we learn to get along with each other and to love and forgive each other, we learn about God. Marriage is a tough challenge (as well as an exciting one) and we need God's gifts to help us manage, gifts such as patience and generosity. In the Marriage Service your families and friends will ask God for these gifts for you. Spend some time thinking carefully about what you need to help you be happily married for the whole of your lives. Then you will be able more effectively to ask God for His gifts. God gives us his gifts freely - we have to learn how to unwrap them, how to appreciate them and use them.

Secondly, in marriage you are two separate individuals with your own likes and dislikes, hopes and ideas. One ought not to submerge in the other, but you are also one married couple. Blame and praise are not divided between you - one more at fault than the other, for example - you are one married couple. Each of you will teach the other and help the other to grow as a person and the two of you must keep on growing together. The person you first turn to will be your husband or wife, and you only turn to outsiders together. Working out what this means will take a long time - the rest of your life.

WHICH CHURCH

Church is not like a supermarket - where you can choose whichever one you like. Church is like a family, to which we belong. There is some choice: you can choose to be married at any Church where either of you worship regularly, or in whose Parish you live, or where you have a Qualifying Connection – for example, links from your parents or grandparents to the church.

WHAT TIME

Weddings can legally happen between 8am. and 6pm. on any day of the year, but we would not be able to have weddings on such days as Christmas Day, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday (the day before Easter Day) and Easter Day. Weddings are often booked up well in advance.

LEGALITIES

It must be ascertained that there is no legal reason why you may not get married. Legal objections are that:-

- 1) you are already married
- 2) you are related to each other
- 3) you are under 18 (16)

This is done through one of:

- a) the publication of banns;
- b) the issue of an ecclesiastical licence;
- c) the issue of a special licence granted by or on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury;
- d) the issue of a Superintendent Registrar's certificate.

When you book your wedding you will be advised which of the above fits your particular situation.

Worshipping regularly

Your right to get married in a particular Church may rest on the fact that it is your Church because you worship regularly there. This is formalised by your signing a form to be included on the Church Electoral Roll. Our legal adviser says that “worshipping regularly” means at least twice a month from the point when you book the wedding until you are married, and for a minimum of six months.

a) Banns

Banns are called in the Churches of both your Parishes on three Sundays before the wedding. YOU will need to see the vicars of both Churches to arrange this, and you will need to collect a banns certificate from the Church where you are not getting married, to give to the priest where you are getting married. (Banns certificates are valid for three months only). We would expect you to go to Church at least six times to hear the banns - three times in each Church. We advise that your Banns are called as early as possible and that you collect (from the other Church) and deliver (to us) the Banns Certificate at least one month before your marriage.

b) Ecclesiastical Licence

After you have been coming at least twice a month for six months, you are entitled to go on the electoral roll of St. Agatha's Church; there is a form to complete and we give you a certificate to show that you are on the electoral roll. Once you have that certificate, you should apply for a

licence to the one of the Surrogates. I will tell you their name and address and phone number. You should ring for an appointment. You will require some form of identification. You should allow two or three weeks to get an ecclesiastical licence.

c) Special Licence

Such licenses are only issued in the most exceptional circumstances. We would need to help you to apply.

d) Superintendent Registrar's Certificate

After you have been coming at least twice a month for six months, you are entitled to go on the electoral roll of St. Agatha's Church; there is a form to complete and we give you a certificate to show that you are on the electoral roll. Once you have that certificate, you should apply to a Registrar's Office. You will need to phone for an appointment. You will require some form of identification, in some cases other legal papers, and also the certificate that you are on the electoral roll. It takes at least four weeks to get a Superintendent Registrar's Certificate

These legalities are your responsibility – although we will help you. You should sort them out as soon as possible, preferably two months before you are due to get married.

THE FEES

The legal fees for a wedding are set by Parliament. The fees for choir, organist, etc., are set by each Church. Both sets of fees vary from year to year. The fees need to be paid by cheque or bank transfer to

THE FLOWERS

It is always a good idea to speak to M M M M M (who is in charge of Church Flowers) on 123456 - and she may be able to give you advice, or even help. If you want someone from outside to put the flowers in Church, you must ask M M M M M's permission. They will need to contact me to arrange when they can get into church. NO ONE IS ALLOWED TO use drawing pins, bluetack or sellotape on the pew ends. Sometimes it is possible to share flowers with other couples getting married on the same day.

PHOTOGRAPHS and VIDEO

The most important thing here is that the photographer should not get in the way. Although it is important that you have a beautiful record of your wedding day, it is also important that the day itself (and especially the service) is enjoyable and reverent. Flash photography would be a disturbance, so it is not allowed during the service. Please tell your guests they will not be allowed to take pictures or videos during the service - only either the professional photographer, or one person chosen by you to take photos. If you wish to have a video recording of your wedding we ask that the recording is made from the church balcony. Because a video is recording a copyright service and copyright music, and the music is live, you will need a copyright license and also need to pay a recording fee. We do usually allow you to have the photographs taken in Church after the service - but please do check with me - and get your photographer to check!

MUSIC

The hymns and music at a wedding can add a lot to the service. Do choose hymns, hymn-tunes and music carefully. See the organist, (NNNNNNN 07123 456789) about this in good time. It will be best to speak to him in Church on Sundays after the 10.45am and 6.30pm services.

THE REHEARSAL

Your wedding day is a very busy day, with much rushing around. It is most important that you “slow down” during the time in Church and that you are at ease, otherwise you will remember nothing of the service. The rehearsal, taken by the priest a few days before the wedding itself, should help you to do this. It will also make sure that everything goes well on the day of the wedding.

I usually try to arrange rehearsals during the week of the wedding itself. The bride and groom, person giving the bride away, best man, and bridesmaids are needed at the rehearsal but if you wish to bring other members of the family with you, that is fine - it's good to meet them.

THE SERVICE

There is no need to have a printed order of service unless you want to - it is perfectly alright simply to use our hymn books. But if you are going to have a printed order of service may I suggest that you allow me to proof-read it before it is printed. We always have a reading from the Bible and a short sermon - it is nice if couples make the choice of reading - again see the separate leaflet. Sometimes couples ask a family member to do the reading.

It is our custom that during the last hymn a collection is taken for the work of the Church, and brought to the altar.

REGISTERS

The Church keeps a wedding Register but the main Register is held electronically by the General Register Office and local County Council Register Offices. You and your witnesses sign a Marriage Document (or Marriage Schedule) which we send to the Registry Office after the wedding. You then apply to them for a Certificate:

<https://cumbria.gov.uk/registrationservice/certificates/copy.asp>

CONFETTI

The problem about confetti is that someone has to clear it up. In order to minimise this, we ask that confetti be thrown only when well away from the Church Door – so that it doesn't blow into church; and we suggest your guests may like to use rice (which was the original confetti) or one of the confettis which birds can eat.

TIMING

It is most important that the service starts promptly. The custom of the bride keeping the groom waiting is a cruel and silly one. You must make sure that groom and best man are at Church 25 minutes before the service is due to start; the bride should be here at least 10 minutes before. If your cars need to make more than one trip, you may need to get the bridesmaids here quite early. Traffic in XXXXX is chaotic, as we all know - so you must make sure that your cars have allowed enough time for hold-ups.

AFTERWARDS

At the moment the thing you are most bothered about is the Big Day. But the Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, after the wedding and the week after, and the week after that, will come. They are actually more important than the wedding day! We hope that some of the things we have said will help you with the time after you have married. Your family and friends will support you; God himself is the biggest help.

You have chosen to be married in Church because it seems right and proper, and because in Church we ask God for His help and hear the blessing (a promise that He will help). We and you need God's help every day, and the best place to receive that help is in Church. Church is the right place for you to be. We hope you will keep on coming.

We hope that you realise
that we take your marriage very seriously,
that we want you to think carefully,
that we believe that you can (through the Church) offer God something,
that God does (through the Church) offer you something.

Any Sunday that you come to Church we will do our best to make you welcome; we are all trying to make our homes and families, the homes and families of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE CONGREGATION

The people at St Agatha's are always delighted to welcome couples coming to Church to prepare for marriage. They put on a couple of social functions each year for wedding couples, to which you will be invited; they will pray for you, and they hope that you will come to feel that you belong at St Agatha's. There are lots of opportunities to get to know them - for example at coffee after Church on Sunday mornings, or at any of the numerous social events at St Agatha's - which are open to everyone.

KEEP US INFORMED

Please keep in contact! If you move house, change your telephone number etc. please let me know immediately. Our only way of getting in touch is by using the information on your application form.

Sometimes weddings have to be cancelled. If this should happen in your case, please do let me know as soon as possible. A letter is best but a short phone call will do.

WHO WILL TAKE MY WEDDING?

I conduct most weddings at St. Agatha's Church but sometimes I am away and I ask another priest to take my place. Obviously, I will let you know who the priest conducting your wedding will be before the day itself! The priest taking the wedding would normally be the person who takes the rehearsal.

IN CONCLUSION

We look forward to seeing you at our Sunday Church Services - 9.00am 10.45am and 6.30pm every Sunday.

I hope that the rest of your preparations go well. Do not hesitate to ring me if there is anything else you wish to ask concerning your wedding.

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01999 999999

Vicar