

# Getting Married at St Mark's

A guide through most commonly asked questions



## Introduction

Thank you for your enquiry about getting married at St Mark's. We are always pleased to receive enquiries and to advise or help in any way we can couples getting married. The following notes are to guide you through the most commonly asked questions.

### **“Can anyone get married at St Mark's?”**

Provided neither of the couple has been married before to a person still living, we are pleased to marry any couple either of whose permanent residence is within the parish of St Mark's, or any couple either of whom is a member of the church and on the electoral roll. In addition, the law has recently changed to allow a couple with a 'demonstrable connection to marry at St Mark's'. If neither the residential nor the membership condition is fulfilled, there can occasionally be a marriage under Special License granted by the Archbishop, but this involves extra cost, and is not automatically granted unless there are special reasons for the marriage to take place at St Mark's. A preference for the church and its surroundings is not normally regarded as sufficient grounds - but you can discuss this with the vicar.

If one or both of the couple has been married before to a person still living, the vicar would be pleased to talk with you about a Service of Blessing, following a civil ceremony in a registry office.

### **“What is the process of getting married?”**

You may have this leaflet in your hands either because you have picked it up at the information desk, or have already enquired at the church office. You now need to talk to the vicar, Paul Perkin, or the curate, Dave Larlee, which you can do by phone between 9.30am and 5.30pm at the church office Mondays to Fridays, or in person after one of the Sunday services (9.30am, 11.15am and 6pm).

The vicar will normally expect to see both of you, to help you think through why you are seeking a church wedding, and explain some of the process. We expect every couple getting married at St Mark's to attend the Marriage Preparation Course which takes place once or twice a year, on five consecutive weekly evenings. It is quite appropriate to attend the course either before or in the few months after getting married - but commitment in advance to the course is a condition of being married at St Mark's.

Once a booking is made and the couple are enrolled on the preparation course, they will need to arrange to meet up with the clergyman conducting the service to arrange the order of service, liaise with the office receptionist on the dates for reading their banns, arrange to have their banns read in any other parish where either is resident, and fix a rehearsal date and time (usually the evening before the service - if possible those present should include the bride and groom, best man, father of the bride or his stand-in, bridesmaid/s and page/s, chief usher, and not too many others besides!). If either of you does not have a British Passport and has been resident in Britain for less than 3 years, you will need to enquire about a special certificate.

## **“How do we make a booking?”**

There are two main bookings to make:

### 1. A clergyman to conduct the wedding

There are several ordained clergy at St Mark's. Any of these can be invited to offer their services, and it is expected that members of the congregation will make their own approach to the person of their choice.

Residents of the parish who do not know the clergy will have a suggestion made to them, after talking to the vicar, of one of the clergy who might be available.

If you have a contact with another clergyman (sometimes an old friend, or a member of the family) it is perfectly acceptable to ask them to conduct or take part in the service. Just make it quite clear to the people concerned, whom you are asking to do what, and then clarify the situation to the church office on the application form enclosed.

### 2. The Church

While making initial enquiries, the availability of a clergyman and the church must coincide in order to make a booking so we would urge you to approach the clergy and the office **before** arranging the date with the venue.

Once a date is confirmed with the clergy and in the church diary, please complete the application form enclosed, which can be given or sent to the church office.

## **“What is the cost of getting married?”**

There is an ecclesiastical fee for marriages conducted within the Church of England. This is collected by us (payable in advance to the church office), and passed on to the church Commissioners. In cases of hardship this fee is sometimes reduced or waived, and we would consider this in situations where there is not many times the cost of the fee being spent on other costs of the wedding.

St Mark's and its clergy make no charge for conducting weddings nor does the church charge a fee. However, we strongly encourage that one of the facilities staff is on duty to assist the clergyman which costs the couple £45.00 for the vergers' time. The team of ushers, under the direction of the chief usher, who is to report to the clergyman conducting the service, are expected to spend about half an hour after the service putting the church straight again for Sunday.

Any extra services of an organist, other musicians, flower arranger, bell-ringer, sound operator, etc. are a matter for private negotiation with the people concerned. The church has no part in these arrangements, but can suggest suitable people to approach.

## **“What can we have in the service?”**

Content of the services is totally at the discretion of the vicar, within the forms of service authorised by Parliament (you will be shown the legal options, from which

you may choose). Of course, the clergy will ask you for your preferences about participants and music, readings, solos, etc, and will make every effort to accommodate your wishes. But the final decision rests with the clergy. The vows may not be altered, although the word “obey” is not obligatory. Secular poetry, readings or songs might not be allowed, especially those expressing the thought of non-Christian beliefs.

Style is quite a different matter from content, and the clergy are quite happy to conduct services in traditional style with robes, or more informally. It would be a great help to them to know if the male wedding party will be wearing morning suits.

Photographs before the service should be completed in time for the service to begin punctually. During the service people, including the bride and groom, behave differently when they know they are being photographed. In order to protect the spiritual and serious nature of the wedding, and to avoid turning a service into a spectacle, the following rules must be observed:

- Any photographs during the service must be taken no further forward than the rearmost row of seats being used, and with no flash.
- A video may be taken from the back of the church, in a fixed position.
- Neither videos nor snaps by any guests other than the authorised photographer are allowed.
- Photographs of the signing of the register may be taken in the vestry, or the side chapel, during the actual signing.
- During or after the recession any photographs the couple would like may be taken, as the service is by then over.

Crèche facilities are available if there are children invited to the wedding. We can open up the room and provide toys, but you will need to ask someone to run the crèche.

Confetti can be thrown outside the church, where the wind naturally and soon disperses it. Inside the church, we would be glad to lend anyone a dustpan and brush to sweep up the litter.

### **“Can we hold the reception at St Mark’s?”**

Receptions in the church hall are not practical due its use as a seminar/meeting area for many different groups, reception foyer, bookshop and the three services commencing on Sunday.

We can recommend possible reception locations within reach of the church.

### **“What if we are marrying away from St Mark’s?”**

Where members are getting married away from St Mark’s, the clergy are delighted to be invited as friends to attend, and it is a further privilege to be invited to take part in the wedding. However, permission from the vicar of the parish of the wedding must be sought; and the St Mark’s clergy have been encouraged not to take on too many such engagements.