

Why Get Married At All?

Our relationships are perhaps the most important things in our lives. Some of these are given to us: our relations, neighbours or colleagues; while others we choose for ourselves. But even when we choose these for ourselves, our effort will be required to work at them. For our good feelings, even towards those with whom we are “in love”, will not always come naturally. Love is something which must be allowed to grow so that being “in love” may blossom into a truly loving relationship.

Marriage is a special relationship in which a woman and a man, because of their love for each other, make a mutual life-long commitment. A marriage begins at a certain point when vows are made to each other, but the marriage itself must be made. The couple will need to make it and build it themselves and that will take both time and effort. Even the “marriage made in heaven” will need to be worked at and built up throughout the couple’s earthly lives. However, the making of a life-long commitment provides the framework for making this marriage. It lays the foundation for a trust which must be cherished and allowed to grow throughout the marriage. For trust in one another allows each to grow as an individual. It provides the context in which you may love and know yourselves to be loved.

Marriage, therefore, is not something static or rigid but a bond of mutual confidence: you may hold your heads up high. For in marriage you have put in your lot together. You face an unknown future but you face it together. Whatever comes your way, you will work it out together. This will not always be easy, but your resolve to do so will be a great strength and by the working through of difficulties together your relationship will grow.

Marriage gives a way of living not just for ourselves but in a life of giving and receiving. This is the kind of life in which we may discover more fully what it means to be human. For we will need to find very practical ways of showing our love: in caring for one another when in good health or in illness, in times when work is demanding or employment is hard to come by, and when we feel like it and when we don’t.

An important part of giving to and receiving from one another will be the expression of your love for each other in your bodily union. For your sexual relationship may enrich and strengthen your relationship with each other. Just as in caring for each other you will try to look after each other’s needs, so in your sexual relationship you lovingly give yourselves to each other so that, as in the words of the marriage service, “The gift of marriage brings husband and wife together in the delight and tenderness of sexual union and joyful commitment to the end of their lives.”. This will be an important aspect of your trust of one another which is so essential to marriage. That is why marriage involves “forsaking all others” so that you may remain always faithful to each other.

Such a marriage provides the foundation of a secure and loving home in which children may grow up. Children of any age are highly vulnerable and need a stable environment. Equally important to them is the loving commitment of a marriage which may give them the space to grow as persons able to love and be loved.

Getting married is a big step to take. But it is a lasting expression of your love for each other and may bring great rewards. For it is to embark on a new kind of relationship. And though you embark on an unknown future, you will do so with a shared commitment to work it out together.

Why Get Married In Church?

When you embark on a marriage, the commitment which you make is to each other but this commitment is also made before God. You decide to get married because of the love which you have for each other, but this love is within the love of God. The vows are made before God not only because of their importance but also because God's love for each of us is constant and boundless. In marriage you are declaring your commitment and desire to love one another for the rest of your lives. To do this you will need to keep returning to the well-springs of love which God supplies.

We are given a pattern for marriage, of commitment to and love for one another, in the love Jesus Christ has shown for his people, the Church. Jesus showed this love throughout his earthly life to all those he came across, but most powerfully in his enduring love, even to his death and beyond to the new life offered in his resurrection. His self-giving love required the giving of his life for the sake of those he loved. For most of us, such a sacrifice will not be asked. But love calls upon us to be generous, to give of ourselves and make smaller sacrifices for the sake of one another.

By getting married in church, you will be making your commitment to each other before the congregation as representatives of the whole people of God. They are to witness to and support you in your marriage. The priest who takes the wedding service has been given authority to do so by the Church. The priest symbolically joins together the hands of the couple, wrapping around their joined hands his stole which is the sign of this authority, while saying the words "Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder.". This declares to the congregation and the wider community that the couple are beginning a new life together in the community. It can be a great encouragement to discover how others may respect this and admire you both for embarking upon this life-long commitment called marriage.

Marriage is a Sacrament. This means that the promises you make to each other, promises of life-long commitment and fidelity are signs of your love for each other. You make these promises asking God to give you His Holy Spirit to help you keep them. The Holy Spirit is poured into your relationship so that it is enriched by His loving presence.

Having your marriage in church will make it a day for all to remember. It allows your family and friends to celebrate and participate in the great event with you, but it also reminds us all that you are following in the way which many have gone before, whose marriages have become a source of joy and strength to themselves and to many others around them.

FAQs

Can anyone get married anywhere?

No, traditionally you had to live within the parish boundaries or be on the Electoral Roll for the parish in order to qualify to be married by Banns. However, recently, the law has changed and you are entitled to get married in a particular church if you can claim some connection with that church, such as:

- You have regularly attended the church in the past
- You were baptised or confirmed in that church
- Your parents have some connection with the church e.g. they attend or were married there
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What is the Electoral Roll?

This is the list of regular attenders at a parish church. You can be put on the Electoral Roll even if you do not live in the parish but have attended regularly for at least 6 months.

What are Banns?

Banns are the ancient way of establishing whether you are entitled to get married in a certain parish. Your names will be read out on 3 consecutive Sundays within 12 weeks of the proposed wedding date and if there are no objections you may be married. Objection can only be for legal reasons such as: you are already married, you are under age and the like.

Can I get married if I am not a UK or EU passport holder?

Yes, you can in certain circumstances. However, in the first instance it is best to contact the local Civil Registrar to check whether, in your case, this is legal. If we are able to proceed it will probably be after obtaining a Bishop's License which will mean you swearing certain affidavits in the presence of the Bishop's surrogate.

How can I find out more and possibly book a wedding?

By coming along to the Parish Office on a Saturday morning between 9.30am & 10.30am. It is best to ring first and book an appointment (01784 469155) or click on the button below to email.

Can we get married in any of the churches in the parish?

If you qualify to get married in Staines Parish, you are entitled to get married in St Mary's, St Peter's or Christ Church. The choice is yours.

Is there any preparation before the wedding?

Yes, early in January of the year you are getting married we first hold an evening for everyone in the same position as yourselves. This takes place in St Peter's and we hold an evening where we introduce you to the Director of Music and the choir. They will sing hymns and anthems for you. The Director of Music will also play some voluntaries. This, we hope, will help you to begin to choose the sort of music you would like for your wedding day.

Then a few weeks later we have a 4 session course on marriage which you will be invited to attend. This, again, is for everyone getting married in that year and is an opportunity to look at Christian marriage and to ask all the questions you always wanted to ask. We have found from past experience that it helps people to focus on the essentials of the day - what you are saying to each other and to God.

In the week before your wedding there will be a rehearsal for you and the key people involved in the Service - bridesmaids, bestman and the person 'giving the bride away'.