

## Weddings –things you need to know

### Who can be married in the church?

Within the Church of England we're not quite at the stage where any one can be married at the church; rather the right to be married at a given church is confined to three categories of people:

1. **People who live within the parish boundaries.** It is worth noting that parish boundaries may or may not follow other boundaries, post –code can be a guide but it is not definitive. To be sure of residence within the parish a check should be made against a map showing the parish boundaries.
2. People who live outside the parish, but who worship regularly at the parish church, where “regularly” is defined as at least once a month for six months. Membership of the church is given to such people through going on the church's **electoral roll**. The electoral roll is nothing to do with council elections! Rather it entitles people to vote at the church's AGM and to be considered as “church members”. Since the electoral roll is renewed every three years it doesn't follow that once some one is on the roll they stay on it, rather applications need to be made every time to roll is renewed by sending the Electoral Roll form to the Electoral Roll Officer.
3. People who have a “**demonstrable connection**” with a parish church. To prevent clergy coming under pressure to make judgements on all sorts of various connections, the types of acceptable connections have been laid down in law, for example, if some one was baptised or confirmed in a parish church, if some one lived in the parish for over 6 months, or if children's parents lived in the parish for over six months, if parents still live in the parish, if parents were married at the church. Such connections would need to be talked over with the Vicar and, wherever possible, some proof offered.
4. Under certain special circumstances the Bishop of Chester, or the Arch bishop may grant a Special licence, but this is rare.

At both churches we are happy to marry people who have been divorced, however, we do so under the authority of the Bishop of Chester and so certain criteria have to apply. It is best to take to the Vicar about your circumstances.

If you get married in a Church of England Church then the Vicar acts as both Priest and Registrar, there is no need to go independently to the Registrar, you will be issued with a wedding certificate on the day of your wedding. The legal requirements are met by the calling of banns (unless there is a special licence).

### Legal Requirements and Banns

- If you both live within the parish **your banns will be read at either St Oswald's or St Lawrence's on three consecutive Sundays before your wedding.**
- If one of you lives in a different parish, then, it is your responsibility to arrange for the reading of the banns at your parish church. You will need to contact the Vicar about 4 months before your wedding, and obtain a certificate once the banns have been read.
- If you both live outside the parish, and have no qualifying connection, then you will be able to marry here by registration on the church's electoral roll. **To qualify for this you must be baptised and you must worship here regularly for a period of at least six months.** After this period you can obtain a form to allow registration. **You will be responsible for the reading of the banns at the parish or parishes as above and obtain the certificates.**
- If you're claiming the right to be married at St Oswald's or St Lawrence's through a qualifying connection, (for example, you were baptised in the parish church, you're parents were married there, you lived in this parish for more than six months, your parents lived in this parish for more that six month), then it would be helpful if you could substantiate your claim.
- Your marriage cannot take place unless your banns have been read in the parish church where you live.

## **Name Change**

- a) If you have changed your name by deed poll, you will need documents to support this.
- b) If you are using a different name to the one on your birth certificate and it has not been legally changed this will need to be recorded on your wedding certificate.

## **Orders of service**

At St Oswald's and St Lawrence's there is a choice between two orders of service; one is "Series 1" the other is the 2001 Common Worship service. Series 1 retains the traditional language of "thee" and "thou" whereas the 2001 service simply uses "you". The two services differ in terms of the introduction given at the beginning of the service which outlines the Christian understanding of marriage. The vows in the two services are very similar – the only difference being one of language. In both services the bride may promise to "obey" her husband, but this decision shouldn't be taken without husband and wife having a mutual understanding of how the promise to "obey" will work in the marriage. It is worth discussing the options the Vicar.

It is traditional for the bride to be **given away** by her father. This isn't a legal requirement and may be omitted. Alternatively, if the bride's father is unable to give her away, and she wants to be given away, the role can be fulfilled by another appropriate person, for example, mother, step-father, brother, uncle.

**Hymns and music** are an important part of the wedding service. Some popular hymns are: One more step along the way I go, Lord of the dance, All things bright and beautiful, Love divine all loves excelling, Jerusalem, Morning has broken, Shine Jesus shine, Praise my soul the king of heaven, Give me joy in my heart, Colours of day. There are also many other lovely and appropriate hymns.

For people getting married at St Oswald's and St Lawrence's there must be one reading from the Bible. There may be other readings too. And asking someone to read is a fantastic way of involving them in such a special day.

**Signing the registers** – there are four documents to be signed, including the wedding certificate. The bride and groom sign as do two witnesses. The tradition is that the best man and the chief bridesmaid sign as witnesses, but anyone over 18 yrs can witness a marriage. It is vitally important that the bride and groom's full name appear on the wedding documents (even the names they don't like!) and that all parties who sign do so using their full name so that it can be read! We're not after an illegible signature.