



PILGRIMS WAY
CHURCHES
Growing together



Wedding Information Booklet

Congratulations on your forthcoming wedding, and thank you for choosing one of our Pilgrims Way Churches to hold your service. Your wedding is an important day which marks the beginning of your married life together, and we are delighted you have chosen to seek God's blessing by holding your ceremony in church. We are aware that organising a wedding can be a stressful time. As a result we have produced this booklet in order to make arranging your church service as easy as possible.

Please read through all the information carefully.

If you have any queries please contact the church administrator Zana Dixon on 01634 842508 or email pilgrimswaychurches@gmail.com

Important Legal Information for Church Weddings

Establishing your identity

The vicar acts as Registrar as well as priest during church weddings. Therefore they have legal responsibilities to ensure couples getting married are who they say they are, and that the marriage is legally conducted. As such if either of you are not EU citizens please let the administrator know as soon as possible as you may need to obtain a Superintendent Registrar's Certificate which can be a lengthy process.

In order to establish both your identities we will need to see the following original documents before banns of marriage can be read:

- An official form of photo ID: current driving licence or passport.
- Proof of EU citizenship: passport or birth certificate.
- Proof of your current address: either your driving licence and one bank statement or utility bill (water, gas, electricity or landline phone NOT mobile) which is less than three months old. Or if you do not have a driving licence then you will need to produce two different utility bills or bank statements.

Legal Entitlement to marry in a particular church

The Church of England wants to encourage couples to marry in church. However, because it is a legal and religious ceremony, both the church and yourselves have a responsibility to ensure all the legal requirements are correct prior to your banns being read.

By law you can only get married in a particular church if you can show evidence of any of the seven legally defined qualifying connections. In principle we are able to agree your preferred wedding date if you inform us that you have a qualifying connection. However we will need to see evidence of this before banns are read.

If your connection is that either of you:

- 1. Do now or have at any time lived in the parish for a period of at least 6 months.** You will need to provide bank statements/ utility bills, rent book or tenancy agreement with your name and parish address, or a signed statement from a neighbour who remembers you living there.
- 2. Have been baptised in the church you want to have your wedding ceremony in.** You will need to provide your baptism certificate or a copy of the entry in the parish register.
- 3. Have been confirmed or prepared for confirmation in the church you want to marry in.** You will need to provide your confirmation certificate or a copy of the entry in the parish confirmation register.
- 4. Have at any time regularly attended a normal service in the church for at least 6 months.** If you are not currently attending then we will need a signed statement from a member of the congregation who remembers you worshipping regularly.
- 5. One of your parents at anytime after you were born lived in the parish for at least 6 months.** Proof of address is needed, plus their birth certificate to show they are your parent.
- 6. One of your parents has regularly attended a normal church service for at least 6 months.** If they are not currently attending then a signed statement from a current member of the congregation who remembers them attending, plus their birth certificate to prove they are your parent.
- 7. One of your parents or grandparents was married in the church.** The marriage certificate and birth certificate are required as proof. However, if it was your grandparents marriage you will need to provide your birth certificate which will name your parents, plus your parent's birth certificate which will name your grandparents on it.

If none of these apply to you

For some couples it may be necessary to establish a qualifying connection in order to proceed with their church wedding. This can be achieved by one or both of you regularly attending church services for a period of at least six months prior to the banns of marriage being read (N.B. this takes place two months before the wedding date within the Pilgrims Way Churches). You will be required to sign a register each time you have attended. It is important to make yourself known to the vicar or churchwardens to ensure this takes place. This is a legal requirement and you have a responsibility to inform us of any unforeseen circumstances which prevent you from regularly attending as this may impact on your ability to marry in your chosen church.

If you have been divorced

If you have previously been married and it ended in divorce this is not an obstacle to marrying again within one of our Pilgrims Way Churches. However, it is a requirement that the couple meet with the parish priest prior to booking their ceremony in order to discuss in strict confidence the circumstances relating to the divorce. In the majority of cases there is no reason why the wedding should not proceed. Nevertheless, where circumstances relating to the divorce are complex, the parish priest may have to consult with the Diocesan Bishop. This means the wedding will not be able to go ahead until both the Bishop and priest are satisfied everything is in order both legally and pastorally.

Publication of Banns

Marriage is a public and legal ceremony. Therefore the publication of banns for both religious and civil weddings is a legal requirement. They are also a public means of identifying whether there are any legal reasons why the wedding may not proceed. In the parishes comprising the Pilgrims Way Churches, banns are generally called two months prior to the wedding date on three successive Sundays during a main service.

However, if you do not live within the parish where you are getting married you must contact the vicar of the parish(es) you live in and ask them to also read out banns for you (there will be a fee payable for this). It is a good idea to attend each church on the Sunday when the banns are read in order to address any mistakes or objections. When the banns have been read you will be issued with a certificate which must be given to the administrator or vicar of the church you are getting married in prior to your wedding.

It is your responsibility to arrange this as your wedding ceremony cannot proceed without a valid banns certificate(s).

Fees

The fees for a wedding at one of our Pilgrims Way Churches may differ slightly depending on the church. The cost is made up of statutory fees which are fixed by the Church of England and agreed by the government, together with local fees. You will be supplied with a breakdown of the fees relevant to the church you wish to marry in at the time of booking.

A non-refundable deposit of £100 is required when you return your banns of marriage application form which will secure your chosen date. Any outstanding balance must be received six weeks prior to your wedding otherwise we have a right to cancel your ceremony without notice. Payments can be made by cheque, payable to the relevant PCC or by bank transfer, details of which can be provided to you.

In the unlikely event your marriage does not take place for any reason the Pilgrims Way Churches do not accept liability for any costs or losses incurred. Once you have booked a wedding at one of our churches you have agreed the terms and conditions as set out in this booklet.

Planning your Church Wedding

Unlike a secular location, you have not 'hired the venue', but are asking the vicar to conduct a religious marriage ceremony according to the Church of England. A church wedding is first and foremost an act of worship.

It is also important to remember that the church building is home to a Christian worshipping community. Therefore we will work with you in producing a very special day which suits your needs, but will also glorify God in the process.

We understand that families come in all shapes and sizes. Therefore it is important to include as many people as possible in your wedding. This could involve them doing a reading, singing a song or just playing a part in making your day unique. The vicar conducting your wedding ceremony will be happy to discuss any ideas you may have.



Rehearsal

We will arrange a rehearsal with you at a mutually convenient time, normally during the week prior to the wedding day. The rehearsal is primarily for you as a couple and those who have a key role in the service. This will enable you all to feel more confident about what you are doing on the day.

Timings

Please remember it is possible the vicar, organist or bellringers may need to leave quickly in order to attend a wedding or event in another church straight after your service. We ask that you ensure your wedding starts on time.

Confetti

Please ask your guests to use biodegradable, rice or rose petal confetti after the service, in the churchyard.

Photography

Please arrive at church in plenty of time to allow for any photos that you want to have taken before the service. This will help ensure your service starts on time.

It's good practice for the photographer (and film crew if you have one!) to consult with the vicar in advance on the suitable places for photography and filming to take place before, during and after the service. The use of flash photography is not permitted during the service as it is very distracting. We also ask that guests refrain from using their own cameras or mobile phones whilst the service is taking place for the same reason. However, there will be an opportunity to take some photographs when the registers are being signed.

If the weather is inclement you are very welcome to take group photographs inside the church after the service. We allocate 2 hours for each wedding. This should provide you with plenty of time for everything, without undue haste.

Readings, Hymns & Music

A church wedding must include at least one bible reading. If you do not already have a favourite bible passage it may be worth while looking on <https://www.yourchurchwedding.org/article/bible-readings-for-your-wedding/> for some ideas.

If choosing hymns it is important to choose ones which will be known to your guests. If you do not have any particular hymns in mind, here are some good websites which will help when choosing:

- <https://www.yourchurchwedding.org/article/hymns-for-your-wedding/>
- <http://nethymnal.org>
- <http://hymnal.oremus.org>

Most weddings include music to cover movement at the entrance of the bride, whilst the registers are being signed, and as the newly married couple exit the church. Please speak to the vicar if you are unsure about this.

Usually the organ is the best instrument to fill the church with sound. If required, we will arrange for an organist to play at your wedding. Furthermore, if you would like a choir to sing at your wedding please let us know and where possible we will try to arrange this. Please note there will be an extra charge for both the organist and the choir. Further details can be provided on request.

If you wish to use a song or piece of music which is pre-recorded please discuss this with your vicar prior to the day.

Bells

Not all the Pilgrims Way Churches have tower bells, but those who do will be happy to ring for your wedding. If this is something you require please book early to avoid disappointment.

Flowers

Most of our churches are regularly decorated with flower arrangements. However, you are welcome to decorate the church with your own flowers, but it is important to discuss this with the churchwardens or church flower arrangers beforehand to ensure they are suitable for our building. At Boxley and Hollingbourne churches there are groups of people who organise the flower arrangements throughout the year. If you are planning a particular colour scheme and would like our flower arrangers to include it in their displays then please speak to them at least six weeks before the wedding date. Details on who to contact can be supplied.

Car Parking

There is limited parking available at all our Pilgrims Way Churches. However, at Boxley church there is the opportunity to use the driveway and part of the car park which is owned and used by the European School of Osteopathy (ESO). However, this is subject to availability and will incur a fee which will need to be paid to them directly. Please note that all vehicles parked on ESO property must be removed immediately after the wedding as the gates will be locked with no further access being granted at the time.

As all our churches are in rural locations it is important to remember to be considerate to the local residents by not blocking roads, driveways or causing traffic jams, particularly if you are parking on a bus route.

Who will conduct your wedding?

Your marrying vicar will invite you to meet with them long before your wedding day. This will be an opportunity to discuss the content of your service and any other matters. **Finally, we are here to help, so if there is anything you are unsure of please do not hesitate to get in contact.**

Pilgrims Way Church Addresses

St Mary the Virgin & All Saints - Boxley Church

The Street
Boxley
Maidstone
ME14 3DR

St Martin of Tours

The Street
Detling
Maidstone
ME14 3JT

All Saints

Church Green
Upper Street
Hollingbourne
MAIDSTONE
ME17 1HW

St Margarets

Church Road
Hucking
Maidstone
ME17 1QT

