

Marriage at St Thomas'

Weddings are an important part of any church's life. Whether or not couples are regular churchgoers, they often look to the Church for their marriage to be blessed by God.

When you get married, you make a public declaration of life-long commitment to love each other faithfully and you take on a whole new identity as husband and wife. It is a considerable commitment to make: marriage is the most serious decision of your life! But it is also a time to celebrate the love and joy that you share together and to declare this before God and in the company of your family and friends. A church wedding offers so much to make this real. The words of the service set our love for one another in the context of God's love for us all shown in Jesus Christ, and in the prayers we ask for God's blessing on the couple in their life together.

Can I get married at St Thomas'?

Marriage at St Thomas' is made possible in one of three ways: if you live in the parish, are habitual worshippers at the church, or have a past or present link with the parish (see below: legal information).

If one of you belongs to another faith that is not Christian, then you can still get married at St Thomas' but you must have the normal Christian service.

At St Thomas' we understand that some marriages fail and we try to help people rebuild their lives in new relationships. If you have been divorced and would like to discuss the possibility of being married a second time in church please do not hesitate to speak to Fr. Robert.

LEGAL INFORMATION

Everyone who lives in the parish or who is on the Church Electoral Roll (different from the state electoral roll) has a right to be married at St Thomas' as long as there is no legal impediment. You do not need to have been baptised. Since October 2008 it is now possible to be married at St Thomas' if you can show that you have a 'qualifying connection'.

The Qualifying Connections with a parish are:-

If the person:-

- was baptised in the parish (this does not apply where the baptism formed part of a combined service of baptism or confirmation); or,
- had his or her confirmation entered in a church register book of a church or chapel in the parish; or,
- has at any time had his or her usual place of residence in the parish for at least six months; or
- has at any time habitually attended public worship in the parish for at least six months;

OR

A parent of that person has at any time during that person's lifetime:-

- had his or her usual place of residence in the parish for at least six months; or
- habitually attended public worship in the parish for at least six months;

OR

- a parent or grandparent of that person was married in the parish.

In the Church of England people can get married only after legal 'preliminaries' which are actually very simple:

i) Banns are the easiest and most commonly used method. They involve notice of your forthcoming wedding being read out in both the bride and the groom's parish churches on three Sundays in the period three months before the wedding. If you both live in the same parish that is all that you need to do; but if one of you lives in another parish banns will have to be called there too. It is customary for couples to attend the calling of their banns. These will take place during the main act of worship on Sundays (The 10am Parish Eucharist). Attendance will help you feel more familiar with the clergy and worship at St Thomas', and, very importantly, ensure the banns have been published.

ii) Licences are a quicker method than banns but more expensive. A licence is usual where one or both people are Foreign Nationals. However, since March 2015 the rules surrounding the Marriage of Foreign Nationals and the issuing of Licences have tightened considerably. Thus, St Thomas' is instructed to use procedures adopted by the Church of England following Home Office advice. For further details contact Fr. Robert.